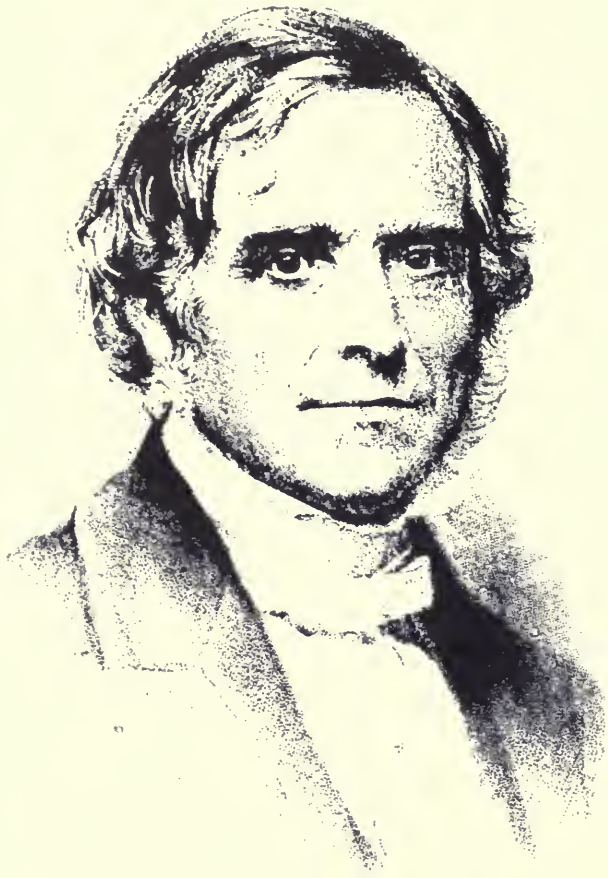


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Frontispiece.

FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE.
From the portrait by Louisa Dickinson.

FREETHINKERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY
JANET E. COURTNEY, O.B.E.

PART-AUTHOR OF
"PILLARS OF EMPIRE"

WITH SEVEN PORTRAITS

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FREETHINKERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

A BOOK which includes subjects so diverse needs some sort of explanation—perhaps even some sort of apology. It was conceived in the autumn of 1918, when the great Crusade of the twentieth century was in sight of its triumphant close. The question could not but obtrude itself: Whence came that passion for liberty which had sustained us and our kinsfolk through the long war that was henceforth to make the world safe for democracy? No doubt this passion was deep-rooted in our common history. It could be traced back to John's Barons and to Magna Carta, to the Protestant Reformers of Elizabeth's days, to Pym and Hampden, to Cromwell and his Ironsides, to those who won American Independence, or Representation and Reform at home in the eighteen thirties. But to all these history had long since paid their meed of praise. If we of the twentieth century were to call to mind famous men, were we not chiefly "bound to recall" the great liberators of our own time, the young men who left home and wife and child to free the world once for all from the terror of German militarism?

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But, thinking on these things, it seemed that the time for that was not yet. It would be hard to discriminate. Moreover, the great moment of uplifting had passed. Those November sunsets, when the wet pavements of Bloomsbury shone in the dying light like the opening of the courts of Heaven—when the very judgment of God seemed to be set and the books to be opened—had faded into the dimness of human jealousy and been obscured by the shadow of national greed. Yet the vision had been there. None who lived through those days can ever forget the awe with which they saw the clouds parted and the avenging Furies in pursuit of the house of Hohenzollern. It was a Greek tragedy and a fulfilment of Hebrew prophecy in one ; it was the everlasting assertion in human life that man makes or mars his own destiny.

* * * * *

The vision had passed ; but the awakening remained, and the question recurred. Who were the spiritual teachers and masters from whom the generation, now grown to maturity, had learned its love of freedom ? Might it not be worth while for men and women of middle age to set down some record of the liberators they had listened to in youth, before a new world arose, tempted to forget its debt to the old ? Any selection must necessarily seem arbitrary. It can but be coloured by individual experience. But there are at least certain broad aspects of freedom which must be represented. Free thought means one thing to the theologian, another to the poet and critic.

The philosopher claims his liberty in one way, the man of science in another. Then there is the fighting politician—"the Radical freethinker," who was such a bogey in our youth. And, last of all but by no means least, there are the pioneers of women's emancipation. Is there any other way of selection, except by recalling the leaders in those different fields of free thought who have meant the most to oneself? So, emboldened by necessity, I have searched my own memories and set down here some record of those who served as beacons to at least one wanderer in the late Victorian age.

* * * * *

As I write there rises before me a picture of a little Lincolnshire market town on the shores of the Humber, of a guarded childhood and a God-fearing but timorous father, whose strongest desire was to shield the faith of his children by keeping them ignorant of the existence of unbelief. A small grey house, in between two ancient churches—themselves a living record of all the ages of faith, telling in stone how Saxon gave way to Norman, Norman to Gothic, simple early English to the clear high lights of Tudor architecture; a garden shaded by beech trees, the sudden glory of whose spring-time budding was the child's first initiation into the passion of love for beauty—that was the setting of a mental growth, fed by the reading of Milton, Shakespeare, and above all the Bible, in the limitless leisure of a country life, where modern literature came but rarely and, to the children, not at all.

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When no other drama comes to distract, a child can find infinite satisfaction in the drama of the seasons. Are not seed-time and harvest, which never fail, the natural basis of all religions? And to the child they were intimately bound up with the drama of the Church's Year—Advent, Christmas, the cold weariness of Lent, the brightness of Easter, Whitsuntide with its soft breath of summer winds, Trinity with its fascinating mystery; and then the pause of summer and the slow on-coming of autumn, and the fierce winds sweeping up over the wolds and shrieking their way to the North Sea. To their roar and reverberation, as Advent came round again, the child would listen tremblingly at night, fearing every moment to hear the sound of the Last Trump which, as she had just sung in church, was to wake the quick and dead—those dead who slept in the churchyard outside the nursery windows, and who might be looking in at the big window on the staircase if one did not run past very quickly with eyes tight shut.

* * * * *

There were few modern books in this Lincolnshire vicarage, and even ancient books could only be read with limitations. Fairy tales were forbidden on Sundays; but there were books of allegories—earthly stories “with a heavenly meaning,” as the children say in Sunday schools. And there were Baring-Gould's *Lives of the Saints* and Newman's *Callista*, and there was *The Story Without an End* and an illustrated *Pilgrim's Progress*. Then there was always the Bible.

Every day began with a chapter, read verse by verse by the children as they sat round the study table. And there were collects and psalms to be learned on Sunday, a lesson in beautiful English and noble thought. There are worse forms of education than even an exclusive study of the Scriptures, and on week-days it was possible to get at Milton (in queer type, with long s's), at Shakespeare, at much of Scott, at *Don Quixote* and Percy's *Reliques*, even at *Gulliver's Travels* and other books of Swift's, whose indecencies passed harmlessly over uncomprehending innocence. And of course there were "lessons," old-fashioned lessons out of text-books with questions and answers to be learned by rote but varied by reading of selected passages from the great historians—Gibbon and Macaulay—or from Alison's dull *History of Europe*, Miss Yonge's brighter *Landmarks*, and Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*.

* * * * *

So passed the unquestioning years in an atmosphere of moderate ecclesiasticism, the faint afterglow of Tractarian illumination, the "middle way" so characteristic of the English Church. Children brought up in it had much to be thankful for. They were saved the stern terrors of Calvinistic evangelicalism, the searchings of heart of those who must experience an inner conversion before they could feel their calling and election sure. But on the other hand they lacked the symbolic teaching of Catholic ritual, the influence of action on thought, and they had no very lasting hold on dogma. They learned by heart the

formulas of the Church, having no reason yet to question them; but perhaps the father who sought to keep them in ignorance of unbelief was wise in his generation, a generation which had not yet realised, with Arnold, that to "think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well" was what the unseen Power required of it.

* * * * *

There was bound to be an awakening. It came, as it must have come to many, by way of mysticism. Children growing up apart from the world are almost instinctively religious, and reproduce in their own experience the wonder of the ages of faith. Certain words and phrases come to have dominion over them; they are loved, not because they are incredible but because they are incomprehensible. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty." Sentences like these, rolled out in a beautiful voice to a reverent, if little understanding, congregation, have the soothing effect of an incantation. But there are others full of the mystery of terror—"where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." It needs no Calvinistic training to make a child's heart quake with fear. There were twilight evenings in the summer garden, when a chill wind shivered through the beech trees, making the leaves turn their backs, and the child understood just how Adam and Eve felt when, in the cool of the day, "they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." She could

speak of these terrors to no one ; but the day when she first heard of Frederick Denison Maurice and of the meaning he gave to " eternal death," has fixed for ever in her mind a picture of another garden--a school garden in the first whiteness of spring-tide blossom on a beautiful Sunday after Easter, when a disciple of Maurice lifted the burden of belief in a burning hell off her heart. That is why, to her at least, he must always be the first of liberators.

* * * * *

Matthew Arnold came next. He is the poet of the serious ; and who is so serious as a young thinker of seventeen, making her first essays at independent thought and drawn irresistibly then, as always, by beauty of form and expression ? A petition to be given his *Poems* as a birthday present was met with much solemn shaking of the head ; but the request, though regarded as " dangerous " in tendency, was not refused. To the girl who had just made acquaintance with Plato and the Greek testament and was looking shyly and eagerly towards Oxford, Arnold was the very prophet of a religion more deeply founded than upon formulæ. She was beginning to be conscious of dangers. She knew there were other and more resonant appeals to liberty sounding in her world. Echoes of the Bradlaugh controversy had reached her. She had heard condemnation passed upon his friend, Mrs. Besant, in a county where Mrs. Besant's husband held a cure of souls ; and she knew that a too daring authoress had been obliged to leave Lincoln

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because of the indignation aroused by her published letter of sympathy.

Radicalism and secularism, in the person of Joseph Chamberlain, had invaded the strongholds of country conservatism, and a desire to hear him speak, expressed in all innocence, had been characterised by an overbearing clergyman of her acquaintance as a proof of "dangerous opinions." She was beginning to be familiar with the term "agnostic." She had been told that one of Huxley's friends had directed these words to be put on his tombstone: "I was. I am not. I shall not be." Matthew Arnold seemed a refuge. It was impossible to find the way back to unquestioning faith; but here was a high seriousness, a courage drawn from an unflinching outlook upon life, something to stand between the shrinking soul and the blank negation, which lay in wait, like the dead outside the nursery window, for the unwary looker over the threshold.

* * * * *

Oxford is not a bad place in which to face the first "obstinate questionings" of a world that must later be reckoned with. And Plato and the neo-Hegelians afford a more sympathetic initiation into the study of metaphysics than the English rationalists. T. H. Green's *Introduction to Hume* is a good antidote to destructive analysis. His political essays are an illuminating corrective of the English Utilitarians. But one may remain at heart an Idealist and yet recognise in Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy* perhaps the chief contribution of the later nineteenth century to the history of thought.

Next to John Stuart Mill he is probably its most widely read English philosopher, just as Huxley was its greatest biologist. But his manner is repellent, and for that reason he never gained many devotees amongst the sensitive. So Leslie Stephen is here chosen as the representative of philosophic free-thought.

* * * * *

Amongst leaders of the woman movement it is hard to select. Some of the most famous are still with us, and the time for a full estimate of their value as a world-force is not yet. Of those that have gone, George Eliot, by her life as well as by her writings, pleaded the most eloquently for freedom; Dorothea Beale, a disciple of Maurice, did most to vindicate woman's right to a liberal education. But perhaps Harriet Martineau, whose pen played so active a part in popularising progressive thought in politics, has the greatest claim to be regarded as the pioneer woman thinker.

These six, therefore, Maurice, Arnold, Bradlaugh, Huxley, Leslie Stephen and Miss Martineau, are here selected for commemoration. There are many other names which press for recognition. But it would be presumption to write of the English Comtists whilst the greatest of them all still lives, or of the stern upholders of a pacifist political morality in the lifetime of the statesman who wrote *On Compromise* and made the great refusal in 1914.

A chapter on Charles Kingsley has been added, not originally intended for this book and, perhaps, rather outside of its scope. But it was suggested by the study of Maurice and occasioned by the

Kingsley centenary : and if Kingsley was not himself a freethinker, he was the associate of freethinkers and in sympathy with free thought. This chapter appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, and my acknowledgments are due to the Editor for permission to republish it.

* * * * *

Now that the genesis of my book has been traced, it remains only to acknowledge my remaining debts. I have aimed at no comprehensive history of English free thought. That has already been ably written by Mr. A. W. Benn in his *History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, by Mr. Andrew D. White in his *History of the Warfare between Science and Theology in Christendom*, and by Mr. J. M. Robertson in his *Short History of Free Thought*.

To all these writers I am perforce indebted ; their books are indispensable to every student of the subject. But for the particular aspects of the problem illustrated by the lives of the freethinkers I have chosen, I have relied chiefly on the writings of those thinkers themselves and on the biographies of them which have appeared. These are enumerated at the end of each chapter and need not be repeated here. My general debt to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and other standard books of reference is so obvious as scarcely to need special mention. To my husband I owe a very special debt for reading and criticising my proof sheets.

FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE

(1805–1872)

JOHN FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE (he dropped the John in later life) was the fifth child and only surviving son of Michael Maurice and Priscilla Hurry, his wife. His father, a Unitarian clergyman, came of a stock which could claim to have fought and suffered for conscience' sake for over a century. He was a descendant of the English Presbyterians, meaning thereby those "dissenting" ministers who, for refusing to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity in 1662, were expelled from their livings, though not, as they themselves upheld, from the English Church. They were by no means necessarily opposed even to episcopacy. They were, most of them, orthodox as to the Trinity. But they resented the claim of the State to fetter their consciences by formulæ, and, unlike the Scottish Presbyterians who bound themselves by the Westminster Confession, the one distinguishing mark of the English Presbyterians was a repudiation of all formal creeds. Did they not in 1719 place it on record that they "saw no Reason to think that a Declaration in other Words than those of Scripture would serve the Cause of Peace and Truth"?

But though Michael Maurice came of this

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Puritan stock, he was not himself a man of great force of character. As the son of an "orthodox" Dissenting minister he had been sent to Hoxton Academy, where he came under the influence of Unitarian professors. There he unlearned the robust "tolerance" of the Puritan divines, who would have each man search the Scriptures for himself and believe as God and His Word should guide him, and he did not learn the larger "tolerance," or charity, which gladly acknowledges the right to differ. At least he never learned it with regard to his own family.

Religion and religious discussion seem to have been the very life-breath of the household. Mrs. Maurice, the daughter of a Yarmouth merchant, had brought her husband some East Anglian property. They lived at first near Beccles, but in 1801 they removed to the fine old manor house of Normanstone close to the sea near Lowestoft. There Frederick was born. An elder brother, William, had died of croup, and the mother's grief was such that she could never utter his name. But she cherished with "peculiar tenderness" the child who came to replace him—so Frederick himself records. There were three elder daughters, Elizabeth, Mary, and Anne, and four younger ones, Emma, Priscilla, and the twins Esther and Lucilla; and from about 1806 onwards an orphan nephew and niece, Edmund and Anne Hurry, made their home also at Normanstone, together with, as a rule, some fifteen or twenty pupils. These were the sons of "orthodox" Dissenters, but also of serious members of the English Church;

for Michael Maurice had a considerable reputation not only for piety but for learning.

The girls of the family were ardently religious. The Unitarianism they had learned from their father became with them of a dogmatic and aggressive type. When not much over ten and twelve years old they converted a young governess of more "orthodox" dissenting views, who had come to take charge of their education, and they continued intolerant of any other creed until, in 1814, the illness and death of Edmund Hurry and the influence of a Moravian lady over his sister brought about a great change. Anne Hurry had at first refused to marry William Harcastle, one of Mr. Maurice's pupils, because he did not share her Unitarian views; but she was now won over to a belief in Christ and after her marriage carried Elizabeth Maurice with her. Anne Maurice followed, and the two sisters, once so staunch in Unitarianism, were now equally stern and set in Calvinistic Christianity.

They acquainted their father of the change in their views by letter, even though they were living under his roof. Anne was the spokeswoman. "We do not think it consistent with the duty we owe to God to attend a Unitarian place of worship." Nor, she added, could they any longer consent to take the Communion with him. The father answered, also by letter: "The sensation your letter has excited in my mind is beyond my powers to describe. I am totally unable to answer it. May God enable me to perform my duty! I certainly was unprepared for such a stroke."

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So true is it that the last to be aware of a soul drama are they of the same household !

Mary Maurice soon joined her sisters ; but an even more poignant defection was to follow. The mother, who throughout had shown a finer perception of the true state of the case and a prouder independence of the world's opinion than her husband, writes to him ten months later : " Though I lament our children's opinions on account of the sorrow you feel, I cannot bring my mind to regret them, whilst I see that they are influential in producing good fruits. . . . With respect to your ability as a minister being diminished by what has taken place, I cannot believe it will be so. If a minister has no motive but the good of his hearers, no persons or circumstances prevent his being useful." Probably, unconsciously to himself, Michael Maurice really had other motives. It takes a man of uncommon strength of mind not to suffer in his personal pride, when there are dissenters in his own household. And, little as they seem to recognise it, men are as a rule far more susceptible to the good opinion of the world than the majority of women.

A year later (1817) Mrs. Maurice became " sufficiently convinced that she had before made to herself a most false god, and that she had never worshipped the God revealed in the Scriptures." She hesitated to grieve her husband further ; but in 1819, " led by the prospect of death," she wrote down a statement of her change of views. She recovered, and he never saw it. In 1821, however, she asked him, again in writing, how,

with least pain to him, she could attend other public worship than his. The division was complete.

She begged for a reply by letter. It seems characteristic of this extraordinary family that, though occupied continually with the things of the Spirit, they were unable to commune with one another except on paper. One cannot but sympathise with Michael Maurice when he expostulates with his wife for not speaking to him, though one can also understand her shrinking from a discussion with one "somewhat hasty in temper and impatient of opposition," as his son has described him. Still a household, which used the post as the ordinary means of communication between the dining-room and the study, can scarcely have been an easy one to live in. Michael Maurice may well have despaired of the future of his family life.

His daughters seem to have believed themselves persecuted, though what they suffered, except the sight of their father's gloom and depression, is by no means clear. He had laid down certain conditions as regards the younger children (Frederick was only ten when the domestic trouble began); but he did not interfere with the elder ones. Here is his own statement to his wife: "I may be blamed, as I have been, for not interfering with the elder branches, and when they were seeking advice from others not inquiring why I was deemed unworthy of their confidence. With regard to the younger . . . I will require their attendance on my ministrations and their assembling at my domestic altar till they can

assign a satisfactory reason for their own separation. I have the painful, the afflicting prospect from all they see and hear, that they will follow the steps of those who may one day feel the anguish I now feel."

He was right. In the end they all forsook his creed, and it says much for the goodness of heart and piety of his daughters that they never forsook him or his hearth. They continued to help him in his work amongst the poor and to educate their younger sisters. Indeed, the trust reposed in them not to influence the religious convictions of the younger children seems to have been both absolute and justified. Frederick's secular and religious education up to the end of his school years remained in the hands of his father.

But the boy undoubtedly suffered; how could it be otherwise? "These years were to me years of moral confusion and contradiction. I had none of the freedom . . . ;" he left the MS. unfinished, but the end can easily be supplied. "None of the freedom of happy unquestioning boyhood; none of the open confidence which there should be between mother and son; none of the peace of a household at one." His mother, convinced that "Calvinism is true," was yet unconvinced of her own election to salvation. She longed that her boy should have the blessing of assurance; she ardently desired also that he should become a minister of "the everlasting Gospel." And he felt, and was troubled by, her unspoken wish, by the conflicting ardours all around him, though the impossibility of communicating with one so

inarticulate in her religion threw him back for sympathy upon the invalid sister, Emma, who became his closest and dearest companion.

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Such was the background of a boyhood spent in the country and by the sea, yet with a more than eighteenth-century disregard of the education of out-door life and an entire absence of any attempt to awaken and train the imagination. "I never knew the note of a single bird, nor watched the habits of any one. . . . From fictions of all kinds, modern or romantic, I was carefully guarded. Miss Edgeworth's *Parents' Assistant* was the only story book, I think, which ever came into my hands as a child; afterwards, I was allowed her *Moral and Popular Tales*. . . . I took great interest in a heavy and undoubtedly a somewhat narrow book, Neal's *History of the Puritans*. . . . I cannot be sure that, along with some dryness and poverty of fancy, I did not gain in this way a certain craving for realities." Still, in later life, he told Kingsley that he felt himself "a hard Puritan almost incapable of enjoyment, though I try to feel no grudge against those who have that which my conscience tells me it is not a virtue but a sin to want."

It was, indeed, an arid bringing up. It is impossible not to be reminded, with Mr. Masterman, of a contemporary instance and to recall John Stuart Mill's sad confession: "I never was a boy, never played at cricket; it is better to let Nature have her own way." But the boy, Maurice, was a born metaphysician; his proper home was in the

world of ideas. This is the keynote of so much that perplexed his friends and disciples in after life. When he was found fighting first on the side of Pusey and demanding subscription to formulæ, then on the side of Ward against the attempts of Convocation to set limits to orthodoxy, or when he championed Chartists and co-operators and then turned round and fought republican doctrines on the ground of the divine ordination of kingship and aristocracy, there were many who called him inconsistent. But what he saw always was the good, the divine element in every cause, whatever dross might be clinging to it. And he could only live and breathe in the purer air of a higher consistency, where contradictories were resolved into unity, and debate gave way to a single-minded passion for the freedom of the knowledge of God.

He was by no means conscious of his bent to philosophy until many years later. No boy of first-rate ability, no budding genius, was ever more diffident and self-distrustful. His family were now living at Frenchay, near Bristol, and in closer touch with social movements such as the anti-Slavery agitation. His letters to his sisters give details about public meetings, about the beginnings of the Bible Society; but there is little about his own aspirations, though a boy friend recalls that, before either of them were fifteen, they had put their names to this resolution: "We pledge each other to endeavour to distinguish ourselves in after life, and to promote as far as lies in our power the good of mankind."

But, as he has himself recorded, his chief desire was for unity. "This has haunted me all my life through ; I have never been able to substitute any desire for that . . . I not only believe in the Trinity in Unity . . . but, strange as it may seem, I owe the depth of this belief in a great measure to my training at home." From the very effort to understand the reasons for denying the doctrine of the Trinity, he learned to see in it the mystic symbol of a greater Unity.

* * * * *

His first ambition was for the Bar ; his second for literature. In the meantime he begged his father to allow him to go to Cambridge, and in October, 1823, he entered Trinity College. Stiff and formal in manner, a home-bred youth and reared in a narrow circle, he had even more of the freshman's shyness to get over than an average undergraduate. And he seems to have been entirely unaware of the unusual impression he created. "The greatest mind since Plato," wrote Julius Hare, one of his teachers. "I spent my time in picking up pebbles beside the ocean of Maurice's genius," said Carlyle's friend, John Sterling, Maurice's favourite companion in his college days and the chief inspirer, with him, of the life and discussions of the "Apostles' Club." His originality of thought made him an acknowledged leader, but this prominence was thrust upon him. He never all through his life put himself forward, except when persecution and injustice had to be fought, or obloquy to be courted and diverted from others.

After six terms at Trinity he moved across to Trinity Hall, the recognised Law College. He passed out with a first-class in Civil Law; but he could take no degree without subscribing to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, and, though by that time he was well on the way to accepting the Church's creed, he could not endure that the development of his opinions "might be influenced in the slightest degree by any consideration of worldly interest." So he left Cambridge without a degree and betook himself to London and literature.

His father had wanted him to be a Unitarian minister; but he felt a distaste for the prospect, not only because of his changing opinions. He says himself that it was due to "something of disgust from what I saw of the class," and that it was intermingled with "a leaven of vanity and flunkeyism." So little of these qualities did he ever exhibit in later life that it seems fairer to attribute the distaste to a dislike of narrowness and to the drawing he felt "towards the anti-Unitarian side . . . because Unitarianism seemed to my boyish logic incoherent and feeble." But he liked no better the tone of the Liberals of the school of Bentham and Mill, with whom he and Sterling consorted in London. Infidelity was contrary to his every inclination, and in his articles for the *Athenæum*, both as contributor and later as editor, he combines Radicalism in politics with reverence for religion and championship of religious men.

His father, who had put a good deal of money

into Spanish bonds, was ruined by the destruction of the Spanish Constitutional Party in 1828. The divisions in his household and his own failing health made pupils no longer possible. Frederick was making little in journalism—indeed, the paper was not paying its way. Something had to be done. The family, now in Southampton, moved into a smaller house. The elder daughters took situations. And Frederick, depressed and at a loss for the future, decided to write a novel! It is difficult not to smile; but he was very serious about it and, in a long visit home at Christmas, communicated his seriousness to his sister Emma. She, very wisely, encouraged the project, chiefly as a cure for dissipation of energies, and many of the last months of her brave and suffering life were spent in studying his illegible sheets, whilst Mrs. Maurice copied them out for him.

A pre-Victorian novel was no light undertaking. Did not *Clarissa Harlowe* extend to nine volumes? Maurice's *Eustace Conway* finally saw the light as a "three-decker;" but it was originally five-volume-length, and took him more than a year to write. It is an ingenuous production, combining an intense seriousness with scenes of abduction and murder, which recall *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. But, characteristically, the hero is a self-distruster, who struggles through error to the light, and the chief love interest turns on the devotion of a sister to a brother. Still those who hold that every one has in him the stuff for one novel, and that a self-revealing one, will be disappointed in *Eustace Conway*. It is not a psychological

document, and it is difficult to understand why Coleridge should have spoken of it "with very high and almost unmingled admiration," except that it contained the character of Fanny Rumbold, a weird, uncanny little creature, who might appeal to the author of *Christabel*. For the rest it brought its author a welcome £100 from Colburn, the publisher: it caused him to be specially toasted at the "Apostles' Club;" and it very nearly got him into a row with Captain Marryat, whose name he had innocently given to a character, "represented in no amiable colours," as that irascible gentleman complained.

* * * * *

Before the novel had appeared Maurice took a decision more serious than his attempt at fiction. He had long been turning towards the Church of England; he now determined to return to the university with a view to reading for Holy Orders. This time he chose Oxford, chiefly as a self-imposed discipline, for, as he writes to Julius Hare, who had given a glowing testimonial to his scholarship, he believes its "barren orthodoxy" will check his own tendency to "looseness and incoherency" in his speculations and serve as a "penance for my self-sufficiency." He entered at Exeter College, an undergraduate of very narrow means and above the usual age; but he was allowed to count his terms at Cambridge and so to shorten the period for his Oxford degree.

Oxford seems to have left little permanent mark on him. The lingering illness and death of his sister Emma made the period a sad one in his

life. He was much straitened for money, though this fact drew out the kindness of his tutors—especially Dr. Jacobson, afterwards Bishop of Chester—and proved their appreciation of him. He made some friends amongst able men—Mr. Gladstone recalled walks and talks with him; but his heart was with his sister, and all his spare time was spent by her sick bed. Perhaps this is why he came out, contrary to the expectation of his tutors, with only a second-class in the Michaelmas class-list of 1831.

Emma had died in July. Three months earlier Frederick had been baptised into the English Church. It was a bitter blow to his father, who, for all his Unitarian opinions, had himself so far followed the “orthodox” tradition that he always baptised “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” “Why, sir,” retorted a more robust dissenter, “as I understand you, you must consider that you baptise in the name of an abstraction, a man, and a metaphor!” Perhaps some such feeling actuated Frederick Maurice, or perhaps it was only that he wished to testify openly to his belief in the Three Persons of the Trinity. Two years later (1833) he went to Lympsham to obtain his title for Holy Orders as curate to Mr. Stephenson, the incumbent.

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Maurice was now twenty-seven. All his life up to this year had been preparation. Much of it had been marked by apparent weakness and wavering, the result no doubt of religious dissension at home acting upon a sensitive organisation which

dreaded to be led into grieving others by any assertion of difference, possibly due to self-will. But, the decision once taken, there was no looking back. Henceforth his life was a life of action, whether in the region of thought or in that of social reform.

The thirty-eight years of his ministry cover an eventful period in the history of the English Church. And he did much to make it more eventful. The Oxford movement had just begun. Keble had the previous year preached his famous sermon on "National Apostasy." The struggle to revive Catholic doctrine and practice; the setback which followed Newman's secession; the efforts of obscurantist bishops and the religious press, by a series of prosecutions, to define the Church's tenets and to rid her of heresy; the beginnings of the Higher Criticism; the rise of the Broad Church party, all these in turn called for Maurice's intervention. He was an ardent controversialist with a passion for justice. He was no less ardent a champion of the cause of the poor and oppressed. He took an active part in the working-class movement for reform, and was one of the first amongst men of his own degree of education to espouse the Chartist cause. And throughout he was a teacher with a message to deliver, and it was his single-minded desire to deliver it which led him into conflict and controversy. "Judge not," to him meant, not only "Refrain yourself from judging," but "Strive with all your might and main to prevent others from passing hasty judgments."

He must be studied under these three aspects, as controversialist, as teacher, and as social reformer. But the three are really one, a man filled with a burning consciousness of the God whom to know is Life Eternal, striving to bring home to his fellow men that, whether they willed it or no, they were born citizens of Christ's kingdom, and that to the reality of this ideal fellowship the Church bears continual witness.

The Church, yes, but not the parties within it. He had an undying hatred of parties and systems, which makes it, perhaps, the stranger that his first plunge into religious controversy was on the side of Dr. Pusey and in defence of "Subscription no Bondage." There was a movement in the Liberal party towards abolishing the necessity of subscribing to the Articles of the Church at the universities. The Tractarians were alarmed. Maurice, too, was alarmed, because he saw in the Articles an impersonal standard of faith, which he regarded as a safeguard against the tyrannous rule of parties or individuals. He believed that the sixteenth century, which drew them up, was characterised by greater sanity of judgment in religious matters than his own troubled time, and he thought that the Articles should be valued for their positive quality as a groundwork, a starting point for thought. Indeed, he went so far as to say that "if used for the purposes of study and not as terms of communion for Churchmen generally, they might contribute to the reconciliation of what was positive in all Christian sects." In a word they were declaratory, not

exhaustive; a mode of expression, not a binding limitation.

The weakness of such a paradox lay in its interpreters. Maurice, with his metaphysical honesty, was capable of so signing the Articles and yet never pressing them against an opponent. But what Newman, with his subtlety, could make of such an interpretation, he was soon to show in *Tract XC*. And, indeed, Maurice himself later in life came to see that the Articles meant to the majority of those who signed them, not a starting-point for thought, but a renunciation of the right to think. The Liberals, he owned in 1870, were right in regarding subscription as tending to dishonesty, if made an absolute condition for a degree, or a step to preferment in the Church.

He went no further with the Tractarians. Pusey's tracts on baptism completed his alienation from them. To Maurice baptism was an affirmation of a membership of the Kingdom of Christ, which had always existed, an outward acknowledgment of an inalienable spiritual heritage. To Pusey the sacrament of baptism wrought upon the recipient a change of nature, a real regeneration, which could, however, be lost by sin and needed to be recovered by repentance. Maurice would never have denied regeneration; but he pressed the analogy as proving his view, asking if the infant at birth *did* undergo change of nature, and did not rather emerge into conditions pre-existing for all mankind. It is only fair to say that the language of the Church Catechism—"a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness; for being by

nature born in sin and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace"—does to the plain man seem to signify much what Pusey thought it did. But it must also be acknowledged that Maurice is right when he urges that the fact of redemption exists independently of the knowledge or acceptance of it, just as the Divine Light lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.

It was the spirit of Puseyism more than the letter with which Maurice could never have sympathised, the desire to keep mankind in leading strings and to perpetuate childhood. He himself recorded many years afterwards the misery which the tract caused him, and described how in the autumn of 1835 he went for a long walk out of London, carrying it with him, until, as he went along, it became more and more clear to him that this tract represented all that he did not think and did not believe. At last he sat down upon a gate "in the open fields of Clapham" and decided that here must be the parting of the ways. He published a tract of his own on baptism, which concluded, "We will not in this solemn matter give place to these doctors in subjection, no, not for an hour." And Dr. Pusey dismissed him as a "self-deceiver," who from henceforth was to be consistently opposed.

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The outward circumstances of his life were changing during these critical years. From Lympsham he had very soon gone to Bubbenhall, near Leamington, where he was curate in sole charge for two years. Thence he had passed on

to London, becoming chaplain to Guy's Hospital, a position better suited to him than preaching to farmers and agricultural labourers, "most of whom have not a notion beyond their teams." Whilst at Bubbenhall he had begun to write the article on "Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy" for the *Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, which was to develop into his life-work. But London would provide him with equal leisure and a more stimulating environment, and he welcomed the change, though his natural despondency was deepened by the sight of so much suffering and by continual pondering over the problem of its connexion with sin. In later years he maintained that suffering was a high calling, an ordination, and that the sufferer was indeed "a priest unto God;" but he could not always in the years at Guy's lay fast hold on this consoling faith.

In 1837 he married Anna Barton, whose sister was the wife of his friend, John Sterling, and her bright sympathy and buoyant encouragement—"making home more delightful than any other society could be"—had an extraordinarily tranquillising and strengthening effect. She seems to have been a rare spirit, "the most transparently truthful person I ever knew," said one friend, "the most fresh and informal." Full of brightness and humour, yet "the most unselfish person I ever conversed with . . . one of the truest and noblest of God's children," as the bereaved husband wrote when, after eight years of happiness, she died, leaving him with two young children. But whilst he still had her, the circle of his activities had

extended. He had become Professor of English Literature at King's College, and editor of the *Educational Magazine*, though he had refused Hare's suggestion that he should be a candidate for the Preachership at Lincoln's Inn, where later, as chaplain, he was to exercise so great and enduring an influence.

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In 1844, about a year before his wife's death, came the second of his great controversies, that with Convocation at Oxford on its treatment of W. G. Ward. Mr. Ward, a Balliol tutor, who had defended Newman's famous *Tract XC.*, published *The Ideal of a Christian Church Considered*, further attacking the Thirty-Nine Articles and maintaining that he and others were entitled to put their own interpretation on them. Such a view was most distasteful to Maurice, who always upheld that the Articles "were drawn up by honest men for an honest purpose." But when the Oxford Heads of Houses appointed a Committee of Doctors to sit in judgment on the book, and proposed to take the vote of Convocation, Maurice felt that liberty of thought was seriously threatened. He felt it all the more because of his "exceeding reverence for the Articles," which he looked upon as "an invaluable charter protecting us against a system which once enslaved and might enslave us again; protecting us also against *Records* and *Times* newspapers, and Bishops of Exeter and Heads of Houses. Without the Articles we should be at the mercy of one or other of these, or be trampled upon by all in succession."

He writes in great anxiety to his friend Arthur (afterwards Dean) Stanley : " Is it really possible that all past experience of the futility of such proceedings is quite lost upon the Heads of Houses ? Of course there is nothing which Ward would more earnestly desire than that his opponents should be betrayed into such an act of madness. His book will be circulated, his opinions will be felt to have merited persecution, the ample ground he has for complaint of England and its Church, will seem to be indefinitely enlarged." And again, to Julius Hare : " I could hardly believe the story ; it seemed so strange an attempt to give a rather unsaleable volume circulation and at the same time so audacious an introduction of a censorship into our English schools. . . . I do not know any persons less fit than the Oxford Dons to exercise such a jurisdiction as they have claimed for themselves."

The statute to be submitted to Convocation declared Mr. Ward not to have subscribed to the Articles in good faith, proposed to deprive him of his degree, and was intended to enable the Vice-Chancellor to call at any time upon any member of the University to declare that in signing the Articles he took them in the sense in which " from his soul " he believed they were originally composed and were now imposed.

The fetters to be thus forged for free thought were only too obvious. Samuel Wilberforce, who had considerable influence with Maurice, wrote : " Do send me your judgment on the whole question. I think that the Church has rather a right to the

service of your pen in the matter, remembering *Subscription no Bondage*." Maurice replied to the challenge in two pamphlets, urging that no one could make the declaration required by the Statute unless he were convinced that every word in the Articles still meant to him exactly what it meant to the Reformers.

Now the Seventh Article begins: "The Old Testament is not contrary to the New, for both in the Old and New Testament *everlasting life* (*æterna vita*) is offered to Mankind by Christ. . . ." But, says Maurice—

"Though this I steadfastly believe . . . I am by no means certain that the Reformers would have given that precise force to the words 'eternal life,' upon which my construction of the Article turns. I do not feel sure that they might not have been willing to take the words 'future state' as a synonym of the words 'eternal life.' If the Article had been drawn up in the eighteenth century, there would have been no doubt about the question; one phrase would certainly have been looked upon as a perfect equivalent for the other."

To this point we must presently return; it contains the whole theory of development, and was vital for Maurice's future. Maurice felt deeply that, if the statute went through—

"All Christian liberty, all manly divinity, and, I believe, also all honesty of purpose is in peril. . . . If Heads of Houses may sit in judgment on Ward's book to-day, they may try Buckland for his geology to-morrow. . . . And all this because a fellow of Balliol has turned Jesuit, and because it is thought desirable to make him a

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martyr and the idol of all the undergraduates. And, meantime, the real sin of Ward is lost sight of . . . that he solemnly assents and consents to a document which he believes to be a base and dishonest one, and that in the most awful acts of his life."

Ward made unscrupulous use of Maurice's protest by quoting it to Convocation as justification for his own assertion that others beside himself signed the Articles in a non-natural sense. The plea did not save him. He was deprived of his degree. But the clause enabling the Vice-Chancellor to exact the new declaration was withdrawn, and liberty so far triumphed. A few months later Ward and a greater than he, the author of *Tract XC.*, seceded to the Church of Rome.

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Maurice was now drawing near to the crisis of his life. So far he was not "suspect" of heresy by any but the Oxford School. Indeed, in 1846 he added on the Professorship of Theology at King's College to that of Literature, he was appointed Boyle Lecturer by the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London, and Warburton Lecturer by the Archbishop of Canterbury. He also became chaplain of Lincoln's Inn. All this fresh work obliged him to give up Guy's Hospital, and he took a house in Queen Square, Bloomsbury. His educational activities increased. He inaugurated a committee of examination for testing the qualifications of women teachers; out of this committee grew Queen's College, Harley Street, and the whole movement for the higher education of

women. He also plunged into the troubled waters of social unrest with his pamphlets on *Politics for the People*, and he inaugurated the Christian Socialist movement.

In 1849 he married Miss Georgina Hare, half-sister to Julius Hare, his life-long friend. She had been a friend of his first wife and proved a true second mother to his boys. His home life was happy. His social activities were increasing. The "prophetic breakfasts," as his friends called them, in Queen Square came to be rallying grounds for people of note who sought his acquaintance. He had started a Bible class at the request of Mr. Ludlow and a few other disciples, which included clergy, doctors, architects, engineers and members of other learned professions. And he was putting more and more zeal and learning into his King's College lectures and discussions.

Much of his best thought was drawn out by this Socratic method, by hearing and answering questions. And most of his literary work took the form of sermons or letters to inquirers, afterwards worked up into essays. These he collected and published, as occasion seemed to call for them ; and in this way there appeared in 1853 the *Theological Essays*. Then the storm, which had long been brewing, broke on his head in full fury.

Dr. Jelf, the Principal of King's College, had for some time been uneasy because Maurice had allied himself with Kingsley ("Parson Lot") and Ludlow, and had inspired the beginnings of the co-operative movement. Not that even Dr. Jelf could regard co-operation as un-Christian ; still

were not some of the co-operators "atheists"? Even before this Maurice had been a champion of unpopular causes and the object of abuse from the religious newspapers. He himself gloried in the abuse and lost no opportunity of testifying in season and out of season against the dangerous tyranny of the heretic-hunting press. Indeed, as R. H. Hutton says of him, he tilted against it like a spiritual knight-errant fighting in the wars of the Lord. But his timorous Principal feared lest the College should be compromised by the militancy of its Professor of Theology and the bad company he kept.

As early as 1848 Jelf made his first remonstrance, when Maurice was supporting the claim of the Jews to be admitted to Parliament. Maurice speaks of the remonstrance lightly in a letter to Hare :—

"I will send you Dr. Jelf's letter to-morrow. It is not at all harsh, and threatens nothing. I wrote him a very long answer, telling him that I had written my different pamphlets partly *because* I was professor at King's College, thinking it the business of a college to lift up its voice against every such suppression of opinion, but that I had taken pains by putting my name and adopting very eccentric opinions that my writing should not be mistaken for his or the bishop's!"

In the following year the religious papers were again in full cry after Maurice, and poor Dr. Jelf was seriously disturbed. His Professor had apparently the approval of the Archbishops, and yet he was clearly anathema to a large part of the

religious world. He tried to bring Maurice to book by writing him a letter containing a series of questions with regard to his attitude to ecclesiastical parties and received from Maurice a detailed reply, winding up with an assurance that he regarded the Creeds, the Liturgy and the Articles as the tests of orthodoxy, and the Bible as the key to all other studies.

For the time Jelf had no alternative but to profess himself satisfied, though he was much upset by the controversy. "I am afraid," writes Maurice to Miss Hare:—

"it has done my good friend Dr. Jelf more harm than me. He is ill in bed, and I am afraid I have some of his nervous feelings to answer for. One is sorry to be the cause of keeping nervous people in a fever, but that comes of their inviting such dangerous explosive reformers to enter their quiet orthodox schools. . . . I think on the whole he likes me . . . with a fair, reasonable Anglican middle-way sort of liking; and I have no notion that he will ever throw me off rudely or harshly."

But Maurice reckoned without Jelf's respect for the opinion of his world. The co-operative movement was making headway. The name "Christian Socialism" had been introduced. The strongholds of Conservatism took alarm. In September, 1851, Croker, who by this time had ceased to be editor of the *Quarterly* but had still a right to insert certain articles, made a violent attack upon the pamphlets and publications of Maurice and Kingsley under the heading "Revolutionary Literature." After quoting a *Times*

article which referred to various pamphlets, *not* by Maurice or his friends, as advocating murder, spoliation, the dissolution of marriage, and the doctrine that obedience to law is slavery, the writer continues:—

“Incredible as it may appear, there is, it seems, a clique of educated and clever but wayward-minded men—the most prominent among them, two *clergymen of the Church of England*—who from, as it seems, a morbid craving for notoriety or a crazy straining after paradox, have taken up the unnatural and unhallowed task of preaching . . . not indeed such open undisguised *Jacobinism and jacquerie* as we have just been quoting, but, under the name of *Christian Socialism*, the same doctrines in a form not the less dangerous for being less honest.” And he goes on to mention Maurice and Kingsley by name, as though their pamphlets advocated the revolutionary atheism they were specially out to combat.

The result might have been foreseen. In November Dr. Jelf writes to Maurice: “After the last meeting of the (King’s College) Council, just as the members were departing, a conversation arose, in the course of which great uneasiness was expressed about you. The immediate *occasion* of the discussion was the article in the *Quarterly*; but what was said referred not so much to the article itself—which few had read—as to the uncomfortable feeling . . . manifesting itself in various quarters.” This “feeling” Dr. Jelf had been requested to express, and he goes on to say that he must speak plainly, at any rate about

Mr. Kingsley : " I confess that I have rarely met with a more reckless and dangerous writer. His mode of using Scripture is, to my mind, indescribably irreverent." Judge then of the Principal's agitation when he sees Maurice's name " on large placards in inky characters in Fleet Street " side by side with that of Kingsley, whom the *Guardian* says " is avowedly associated (and paraded on a placard) with several notorious infidels," one of whom seems to have delivered a funeral oration " over an infidel adulteress, in which he speaks of the ' distorted memory of *our own Paine*.' "

Poor Dr. Jelf ! It is impossible not to feel for him and his horror at the placards, especially when he urges plaintively that Mr. Maurice " will be identified with Mr. Kingsley, and Mr. Kingsley is identified with Mr. Holyoake, and Mr. Holyoake is identified with Tom Paine. There are only three links between King's College and the author of *The Rights of Man* " !

Of course the *Guardian* had either been misinformed, or was deliberately misrepresenting ; Maurice had no difficulty in dissociating Kingsley from Holyoake and breaking down the three links. But he courted a fuller examination. Dr. Jelf had ended his letter by urging Maurice " to take prompt and decisive action to vindicate your character. . . . It may not be too late. But the Council is thoroughly alarmed, and unless you are prepared to allay their just apprehensions, the best advice which your most sincere friend could give you would be to resign your office without delay."

Maurice naturally refused. "I cannot resign my office while such insinuations are current respecting me. I should be unworthy to be a minister of the English Church if I took such a step. I ask for a full examination." A clerical sub-Committee of the Council was therefore appointed to go into the question. It absolved Maurice of any theological unsoundness, recognised his high motives in promoting Christian Socialism, but regretted that his name had been mixed up with publications by other writers "of very questionable tendency." There the matter rested for a time.

But only for a time. The "just apprehensions" of the Council were but little allayed. Maurice felt himself impelled more and more to plain speaking. From all sides evidence was pouring in upon him of the prevalence of unbelief. He could not doubt that the Church was at fault, and in no point so much as in her teaching about everlasting reward and punishment. And she was at fault just in proportion as she had failed to understand, or had departed from, Christ's own explicit statement: "This is Life Eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

The Reformers had been wiser than their successors. Having inserted an Article on Everlasting Punishment in the first Forty-two they omitted it in the later Thirty-nine. They would not dogmatise upon the subject. But later divines insisted upon dogmatising, with deplorable results. "We have the testimony of persons very competent

to speak, from the extent and variety of their experience . . . that multitudes of the upper classes are scared into infidelity " by such dogmatising, whilst—"as many clergymen in metropolitan parishes know"—it provides "some of the most plausible and effective arguments against Christianity to those who lecture among the lower classes." On the one hand men are escaping to Rome because purgatory is more merciful than the Anglican hell ; on the other hand men of heart and conscience are declaring, with John Stuart Mill, that if they must recognise as good a Being who could sentence them to hell, to hell they will choose to go.

To Maurice, the Greek scholar and the Platonist, it was abundantly clear that the Greek word *αἰώνιος* is wrongly rendered by "everlasting," because the English word introduces the idea of duration, totally absent from the Greek. "Eternal," he says, "is a key-word of the New Testament. To draw our minds from the temporal, to fix them on the eternal, is the very aim of the divine economy. . . . How dangerous to introduce the notion of duration into a word from which Our Lord has deliberately excluded it !" To his philosophical mind there was no difficulty in regarding time as only a mode of human cognition whilst life belonged to the world of Ideas, those pure substances which Plato conceived of as existing in a region penetrable only by the higher reason, not to be apprehended by the lower intelligence.

It might be urged that such a philosophy could not be grasped by unlearned and ignorant men,

and that to them the doctrine of reward and punishment appealed. But Maurice would have none of an esoteric philosophy for the few and a popular theology to keep the people in subjection. The truth could be put in simple words. "The spiritual world is not subject to temporal conditions. This is no discovery of philosophers. Every peasant knows it as well as Newton." Eternal life and eternal death are states which exist now; they have nothing to do with the doctrine of future reward or punishment. Eternal life is to know God; eternal death is to be ignorant of Him. But God exists, independently of the knowing subject; and who dare limit His power to open the eyes of the blind? "I feel there is an abyss of Death into which I may sink and be lost. Christ's Gospel reveals an abyss of Love below that; I am content to be lost in that."

The *Theological Essays* were primarily addressed to Unitarians, and aimed at explaining to them the doctrines of the Creed. But the book was also Maurice's confession of faith, the message that he felt he had been sent to deliver. Long before it was published he had foreseen its effect. The *Record* left Jelf in no doubt as to how the religious world would protect its hell. In July Maurice wrote to Kingsley: "I knew when I wrote the sentences about eternal death that I was writing my own sentence at King's College. And so it will be. Jelf is behaving very fairly, even kindly; but the issue is quite certain. I hope to be shown how I may act, so that my

tumble may involve no loss of liberty to any English clergyman."

In October the Council met to consider Jelf's correspondence with Maurice. "After long and anxious deliberation" they decided that his opinions "regarding the future punishment of the wicked and the final issues of the day of judgment are of dangerous tendency, and calculated to unsettle the minds of the theological students of King's College." They, therefore, declared that Maurice's further connexion with the college "would be seriously detrimental to its usefulness." An amendment, moved by Mr. Gladstone, that the Bishop of London should be asked to appoint competent theologians to examine Maurice's writings, was lost and the original motion was carried. Maurice asked whether he should continue until the end of term, or suspend his lectures at once. He was told that he was not to appear again before either of his classes.

He could hardly have been treated more harshly if he had been a moral offender. He felt the ungraciousness more than the injustice. But the whole proceeding was characterised by unseemly haste. Important members of the Council, such as the Bishop of Lichfield and Milman, the Dean of St. Paul's, were absent, because they were unaware that the matter was urgent. Their letters were not even read to the Council, and Mr. Gladstone said afterwards that he believed this omission led to the refusal of further consideration. But probably consideration would have meant only postponement, not reversal of

the decision. The omission is regrettable for the sake of the Council's reputation ; to Maurice it was of small account.

His reply was full of dignity. He recognised that he was charged with departing from the orthodox faith, and that the Principal's refusal to allow him to complete his term's teaching was tantamount to "executing an ecclesiastical sentence upon a convicted heretic." He claimed, therefore, to be told who constituted the Principal and Council to be "arbiters of the theology of the English Church," and he called upon the Council "to declare what article of our faith condemns my teaching." The Council did not reply ; perhaps they could not. They merely declared the two chairs in the college held by Mr. Maurice to be vacant.

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At the age of forty-eight Maurice stood before the world, branded as a heretic. But, being thus lifted up, more than ever he drew men to him. The Benchers of Lincoln's Inn refused to allow him to resign his chaplaincy. Addresses of sympathy from working men, from former pupils, even from Nonconformists, poured in upon him. He remained unmoved at heart. "My appeal has been to the formularies of the Church. . . . They cannot drive me out of the Church of England." He turned to the people, and for the next seven years occupied himself mainly with starting the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street and completing his *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, published finally in 1861.

One other great controversy was to draw him from his retirement, that with Dean Mansel on Reason and Revelation. In 1858 Mr. Mansel, at that time one of the Oxford professors of philosophy, was Bampton Lecturer at Oxford. As a philosopher he belonged to the English sceptical school and was strongly opposed to the Hegelian views beginning to be prevalent in Oxford. Leslie Stephen has claimed for him that he was the chief founder of modern Agnosticism, a term unknown in his day and introduced ten years later by Huxley, but designating a philosopher who denies on principle the possibility of absolute knowledge.

Scepticism, in the philosophical sense, has always been a distinguishing mark of British thought. Hume's brilliant analysis raised it to its highest level; the Common-sense Scottish school of realists gave it its most prosaic expression. With Mansel it took the insidious form of claiming to strengthen religion by making it dependent not on Reason but on Revelation, at the same time denying the power of the human intellect to attain to any immediate knowledge of God. There has been an interesting modern parallel. Did not Mr. Balfour, the author of *A Defence of Philosophic Doubt*, follow it up by *The Foundations of Belief*, in which, after undermining those foundations by despairing of all philosophies, he rebuilt his structure on the ground of Authority?

Mansel was a clear and brilliant writer, a logician of parts. The argument of his Bampton Lectures, afterwards published as *The Limits of Religious Thought*, is, in his own words, briefly this.

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The mental conditions which determine the character of a philosophy of religion must be the same with those which determine the character of philosophy in general. The problem of philosophy in all ages has been to determine the nature of Absolute and Infinite Existence and its relation to relative and finite existences. A Christian, who believes (from Revelation) that God made the world, must believe that before that creation God existed alone, and therefore as the One Absolute Being. He must also believe in Him as an Infinite Being, for the finite involves the possibility of an Infinite. The God, therefore, who is absolute in Himself, must also be the First Cause in relation to his creatures.

Further, the God, demanded by our moral and religious consciousness, must be a Person. This involves us in contradictions, for to predicate personality of the Absolute is at once to limit it and bring it into relations. The limits of positive thought, therefore, are narrower than the limits of belief; but the apparent contradictions are no valid argument against the belief. They result from the illegitimate attempt to extend reason beyond its proper province. We may, Mansel concludes, believe that a personal God exists; we may believe that He is also absolute and infinite; though we are unable, under our present conditions of thought, to *conceive the manner in which the attributes of absoluteness and infinity co-exist with those which constitute personality.*

Approaching the problem in another way, "the two fundamental feelings on which religious thought

is based—the sense of Dependence and the sense of Moral Obligation—necessarily point to a Personal Being, who as a Free Agent can hear and answer prayer, and as a Moral Governor is the source and author of the moral law within us.” Again we must make the distinction between belief in the fact and conception of the manner. With Leibnitz we must say “*Il nous suffit d’un certain ce que c’est ; mais le comment nous passe et ne nous est point nécessaire.*”

The positive knowledge which we have of God in this life is not of His absolute nature, but only as He is imperfectly represented by those qualities in us, His creatures, which are analogous to His own. Such conceptions as we have of Him are therefore *regulative*, not *speculative*, *i.e.* conceptions derived not from immediate perception or intuition of the object itself, but from something supposed more or less nearly to resemble it. Thus to speak of God as feeling anger or pity is to borrow from the human consciousness terms, which express indirectly and by way of analogy certain divine attributes. We are compelled to acquiesce, as our highest point of positive thought, in principles which we can only practically assume and act upon as true. The difficulties in theology, as in any other field of thought, arise from conditions to which reason is universally subject. When any Christian doctrine (*e.g.* that of eternal punishment) is attacked as contrary to reason, we must remember that the contradictions between Reason and Revelation are apparent, not real ; “for in order to know two ideas to be really con-

tradictory, it is necessary to have a positive and distinct conception of both as they are in themselves; whereas we have no such positive conception of divine things *per se*."

What, according to Mansel, follows from this destructive analysis? It follows that our conceptions of the Divine Nature are "merely approximate representations, leading only to probabilities." As we have no direct experience of the divine attributes, we cannot establish even an inductive science of theology, far less a deductive one, since we can attain to no positive conception of the nature of an Absolute and Infinite Being. "We are compelled to reason by analogy, and analogy furnishes only probabilities." But there are three distinct sources from which we may form a judgment about the ways of God; first, *a priori*, from our own moral and intellectual consciousness; secondly, from our experience of how God's providence works in the constitution and course of nature; thirdly, from Revelation attested by proper evidences. Where these three agree we have *moral certainty*. Reason may be fallible in matters of religion, but it is not therefore worthless. It may serve to test evidence. But "a Revelation tested by sufficient evidence is superior to Reason. . . . We are bound to believe that a Revelation given by God can never contain anything that is really unwise or unrighteous." It is only our fallible Reason which leads us to so erroneous a supposition. Where the divine origin of the Revelation is fully established, the authority of Reason as a criterion is reduced to the lowest point.

It all comes back, therefore, to a question of Christian evidences, and Mansel denies the right of any believer to question this or that portion of Christian teaching as erroneous or inessential. It must be all or nothing. And among the doctrines cited as part of the Christian faith is that of eternal punishment, the true meaning of which Maurice had spent his life in trying to elucidate and to bring into accord with men's highest instincts. Small wonder, therefore, that he joined issue with a philosophy which seemed to him so deadly, which denied any direct revelation of God to the soul and rested all upon a historical Revelation only too certain to be challenged. It was no personal animosity that inspired him. He was jealous, not for himself, but for his faith and for the souls of the rising generation. He had been accused of "unsettling the minds" of the students at King's College by preaching to them a Gospel of hope and love. Now, tidings were brought to him that the youth of Oxford were crowding to listen to what seemed to him "the most unalloyed Atheism that had been heard in England for generations." Here was the true setting up of "religion" against God. From his youth up he had had a horror of those who sought to set limits to knowledge, warning their hearers "against feeling too strongly, thinking too deeply, lest they should find too much of the Almighty wisdom, lest they should be too conscious of the Almighty goodness."

He rushed into controversy now, as always, with a whole heart and a single mind. But he

did not limit himself to the points at issue, and his wrath against principles was interpreted as hostility to persons. His invariable habit of keeping distinct in his mind the offence from the offender was seldom understood, and Mansel was perhaps justified in his indignation at some of the accusations which he thought were brought against him. Maurice did not always express himself very clearly. Indeed, "inappropriateness," the epithet applied by a critic to some of his methods, might often have been applied to his controversial language. His habitual self-reproach for shortcomings of thought and deed ran like a thread of soliloquy through his writings. R. H. Hutton thinks that an instance occurs in this controversy, and that a sentence directed against himself and his own intolerance towards his friend John Sterling's doubts was interpreted by Mansel as a personal accusation. "The remembrance of hard and proud words spoken against those who were crying out for truth will always be the bitterest of remembrances." This might be an expression of Maurice's own remorse for failing to recognise that all honest doubt is a sign of a God-given yearning for truth, which He himself has promised to satisfy by revealing Himself to the seeker. It could not properly be applicable to Mansel, whose whole teaching was that God does not so reveal Himself but can only give men "regulative" hints, rules of action, working hypotheses concerning Himself, on which for practical purposes they must proceed. That such a doctrine, so far from being a defence of orthodoxy,

would prove a deadly weapon in the hands of its foes, the whole subsequent history of Agnosticism was abundantly to show.

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It was the last of Maurice's great controversies. The later years were to bring comparative peace. In 1860 he was appointed to the ministry of St. Peter's, Vere Street, in spite of the effort of the *Record* to organise a protest against his institution. When, owing to dislike for Jowett's theological opinions, the Senate of Oxford University withheld his salary as Regius Professor of Greek, Maurice wrote, "I am more strong than ever on the side of fixed laws, since I see the determination of mobs as well as bishops and doctors to stretch prerogative." But he took no active part in the further controversies concerning *Essays and Reviews*.

He was more personally concerned with the trouble which arose when Bishop Colenso published his criticism of the Pentateuch. He disliked the book immensely and did not hide his dislike from its author. "The pain which Colenso's book has caused me is more than I can tell you," he wrote to Llewellyn Davies.

"I used nearly your words, 'It is the most purely negative criticism I ever read,' in writing to him. . . . He seems to imagine himself a great critic and discoverer. . . . I asked him whether he did not think Samuel must have been a horrid scoundrel if he forged a story about the I AM speaking to Moses, and to my unspeakable surprise and terror he said, 'No! Many good men had done such things. He might not mean more than Milton meant.' . . . He even threw out the

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notion that the Pentateuch might be a poem . . . and showed that his idea of poetry was that it is something which is not historical. And his idea of history is that it is a branch of arithmetic."

But, as Maurice goes on to say, he was bound to Colenso by many ties of gratitude for support in days of difficulty, and when it was suggested that protest on his part might be attributed to a desire to establish his own orthodoxy and to vindicate his right to hold his living, he at once proposed to resign so as to be free to speak. The unworldly readiness was characteristic. More than once he resigned posts, or offered to resign them, for fear that enmity to himself might endanger friends or causes with which he was associated. Fortunately in this case he was dissuaded from beginning life again at fifty-seven, trying "to turn an honest penny by taking pupils in theology, ecclesiastical history, or moral philosophy."

He greatly regretted the legal action against Colenso taken by the Bishop of Capetown, just as he regretted the prosecutions instituted in England against clergy for ritual offences or doctrinal errors. But he protested with all his might against the tyranny involved in the Puseyite attempt to make the younger clergy sign a declaration, "for the love of God," that they would hold certain doctrines, whatever might be the judgment of the Privy Council. Such a declaration meant, he said: "'Sign, or we will turn the whole force of religious public opinion against you. Sign, or we will starve you! Look at the Greek Professor.' This is what is called signing 'for the love of God.'"

I accept Dr. Pusey's own statement, tremendous as it is. I say that the God whom we are adjured to love under these penalties is not the God of whom I have read in the Canonical Scriptures." Well might Pusey say that he and Maurice "worshipped different Gods."

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His life was drawing towards its close. In 1866 he was elected to the Knightsbridge Professorship of Casuistry, Moral Theology and Moral Philosophy at Cambridge, previously held by Grote. It was the most effective answer that could be given to King's College intolerance and Oxford contempt. Maurice accepted with the most grateful recognition the compliment paid him by his own university. He lectured on "Conscience," on "Hope," on "Social Morality"; he continued to take a most practical interest in educational movements; he expressed his sympathy with the movement for female suffrage. He entered little into controversy, though, when Leslie Stephen identified him with the Broad Church movement, he was impelled to repudiate the connexion and to explain the definiteness of his belief in the Articles and Creeds.

His heart, during these closing years, was in parochial work. When failing strength obliged him to give up the attempt to combine Sunday preaching in Vere Street with week-day lecturing at Cambridge, he resigned Vere Street but accepted a small parish in Cambridge. With his silvery white hair and almost unearthly beauty

in old age, to many he seemed a veritable re-incarnation of the Apostle John. "The most beautiful human soul whom God has allowed me to meet with upon earth," wrote Kingsley. "There is about that man *θεῖον τι πάθος*," said even Thompson of Trinity. And undergraduates turned to look after him in the street as he went to and fro upon errands of mercy. In 1872 he died, just as the night following Easter Day gave way to the morning.

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Little has been said yet of his message and nothing of his great activity in social work. It was his life more than his tenets which turned many to righteousness and still more to a realisation of the worth of that liberty for which he fought. His son's picture of him, as R. H. Hutton says, is that "of a man living, and living eagerly, in time for ends which mere creatures of time cannot either measure or apprehend. . . . There was no day in his life that was not chiefly lived in the light of eternity." As a philosopher he was interested mainly in the history of philosophy, in the analysis of men's successive efforts to attain to the knowledge of the Divine, or so he interpreted the long series of systems which he so carefully studied. As a theologian he began at the other end. The knowledge of God is possible to man because God has revealed himself in Christ; and Christ's kingdom embraces the whole earth. In opening his eyes to this revelation, which is within him and about him, every citizen of Christ's kingdom may attain to eternal life *now*. There is no death

except that which consists in deliberate closing of the eyes of the soul to this knowledge. There can be no "everlasting death," since God must be all in all.

It was a gospel of hope, and at the same time a gospel of action. The Christ life was to be lived now. It could only be a life of service. C. W. Stubbs, the Dean of Ely, who regards Maurice as "perhaps the greatest, certainly the most typical, theologian of the nineteenth century," points out that it was his restatement of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, as the exaltation of human nature, which rendered possible the great forward movement towards social reform made since by the Church of England. In this Maurice anticipated by forty years the authors of *Lux Mundi* and the founders of the modern Christian Social Union.

Maurice himself always attributed to his reading of Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* his own firm belief in the essential divinity of man, as typified by that "taking of the manhood into God" which the Athanasian Creed asserts. But he was not content to state the doctrine of the Incarnation as an article of faith; he wanted to translate it into actual life as lived in the nineteenth century. To him it meant that God has a plan for the world, by which the perfection both of the individual and of the race is to be accomplished; that each age of the world has its own contribution to make to that plan, and can help or hinder it; that there is a Christian ideal for society towards which the world is moving.

But when he looked abroad in "the hungry forties" and saw the distress all around, the social misery finding its voice in the Chartist agitation, he realised that the Church, which in its essence was meant to be the Kingdom of Christ, had forgotten its true mission. The Manchester School was in the ascendant. The mere suggestion that working men had a right to combine for their own protection was treated as dangerous Jacobinism. Plague, pestilence and famine were the visitation of God; to say, as Kingsley said, that the cholera was "God's handwriting on the wall against us for our sins of filth and laziness," was regarded as downright blasphemy.

In 1844 Maurice and Kingsley first came into correspondence. The younger man had just been appointed rector of Eversley. He had become acquainted with Maurice's writings, and he wrote, "as the young priest to the elder prophet," for help and counsel. It was the beginning of a friendship closed only by death and fruitful in social activity. When, on the 10th April, 1848, all London was waiting breathless for what might result from the carrying of the monster petition of the Chartists to Parliament, Kingsley and Ludlow hurried to Kennington Common—as Kingsley said, "to see what man could do to avoid bloodshed." On Waterloo Bridge they heard that O'Connor, seeing the force of special constables arrayed against them, had told the people to go home. Maurice was confined to the house by illness, but it was he who had brought Kingsley and Ludlow together. They turned back and

went to tell him the good news. Within a week the Christian Socialist movement had been born, and Maurice and his friends had embarked upon a new series of "tracts for the times," to be called *Politics for the People*.

Kingsley's name came most before the public, and he soon made famous his pseudonym of "Parson Lot." But Maurice was the real inspirer of the movement and its directing spirit. He it was who drew up the prospectus, declaring that "Politics for the People cannot be separated from religion. They must either start from Atheism, or from the acknowledgment that a living and righteous God is ruling in human society. . . . The world is governed by God . . . this is the pledge that Liberty, Fraternity, Unity" (always his guiding thought) . . . "are intended for every people under the sun."

The series ran for seventeen weeks. It was weak on the constructive side, as Maurice confessed. The following year he attacked the great problem of the relation between capital and labour in a more practical form by inaugurating the first co-operative association amongst English working men. It was an association of London tailors, and Kingsley helped to launch it by his famous tract, *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*, drawing upon himself widespread denunciation as the author of "a foul attack on the rights and claims of education and society"—in other words, the right of the rich to make themselves comfortable at the expense of the poor. This Tailors' Association was followed up by the organisation of the Society for

the Promotion of Working-men's Associations, which enlisted, amongst others, the help of Vansittart Neale, who was to do so much for the growth and development of the Co-operative movement.

Maurice not only directed the movement in its early stages with a good sense and a business instinct which his friends hardly expected of him, but he also kept it faithful to the high ideal with which it started. He refused to believe that society was built up on the selfish and competitive instincts of mankind. It was not man's business to construct any new form of society ; all he had to do was to recognise his divinely created obligations to the existing form, which, being God's order, was founded on mutual love and fellowship. Law and Christianity, as he wrote to Jelf in 1851, must be shown to the working man to be "not the supports and agents of Capital . . . but the only protectors of all classes from the selfishness which is the destruction of all." That is why he invented the term "Christian Socialism." "My dear friend," he writes to Ludlow, "we must not beat about the bush. What right have we to address the English people? We must have something special to tell them, or we ought not to speak. Tracts on 'Christian Socialism' is, it seems to me, the only title which will define our object and will commit us at once to the conflict we must engage in sooner or later with the unsocial Christians and the unchristian Socialists."

And when his association with socialists and co-operators had helped to bring about his

banishment from King's College, he used his great teaching powers in lecturing to working men. The collapse of one of the co-operative associations had left him with a house in Red Lion Square on his hands. He raised funds by a series of lectures, and in the autumn of 1854 launched the Working Men's College, where teachers as famous as Ruskin, Rossetti, Frederic Harrison, FitzJames Stephen, were amongst his supporters, and his own little circle—Kingsley, Ludlow, Thomas Hughes and the rest—lectured on history and economics. The idea was not a new one. To a certain extent it had been anticipated by Frederick Robertson at Brighton, with his Working Men's Institute in 1848, and Sheffield had had a People's College even earlier. But Maurice's Working Men's College was the first of its kind in London and has remained to this day, in its present home in Great Ormond Street, a model for others.

There were, of course, troubles connected with it. One of them was the secularist bent of many of the members, and another was the vexed question of Sunday observance. Maurice himself held up the standard of religion by lecturing on the New Testament and Christian Ethics at eight o'clock on Sunday mornings. He was convinced "that a Working College, if it is to do anything, must be in direct hostility to the Secularists—that is to say, must assert that as its foundation principle which they are denying. But to do this effectually it must also be in direct hostility to the Religionists—that is to say, it must assert the principle that God is to be sought and honoured

in every pursuit, not merely in something technically called religion." He was quite clear about the principle, but he was often doubtful how to proceed about details, such as the organizing of Sunday walks and excursions, and he lamented the indifference of many to the prayers which he still continued to read.

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It needs some mental effort to look back to a time when Sunday walks and indifference to college prayers were regarded as serious signs of a dangerous secularising tendency. But the very greatness of the effort proves the greatness of the advance, which none more than Frederick Maurice made possible for succeeding generations. He made it all the more possible, because he remained a devout son of the Church. To fight tyranny and obscurantism from within is harder than to attack them from without, harder, because wounds received by a man in the house of his friends bleed inwardly and sap the strength of all but the strongest.

Maurice would never have called himself a freethinker. He was no "freethinker," in the narrower sense of one who perforce questions Christian principles, an erroneous interpretation, which the word was never intended to convey. But that he was one of the great promoters of unfettered thinking, both within and without the Church, let the long line of his disciples bear convincing testimony.

They were to be found in many fields besides that of social reform. In his lifetime he was

acclaimed by those, who either failed to understand him, or, like Leslie Stephen, were disposed to represent him, as the originator of the Broad Church movement and responsible for its "waste of ability and honesty." * He repudiated the attribution most energetically, even though the Broad Churchmen were, many of them, such as Stanley—"that bigot for toleration"—his personal friends. In truer descent were Kingsley and the muscular Christians, oddly unlike, as they were, to their frail, spiritual begetter. But truest of all were Westcott, Hort and Lightfoot in theology—those conservatives of the Higher Criticism—who carried on his careful inquiry into Johannine literature; and sifted his beautiful, if sometimes mystical, interpretations of the Fourth Gospel and the Book of Revelation. Mystics of another type, a fantastic type, of which George MacDonald is the best example, fathered much upon him which he would have been the first to disavow. But Maurice must no more be judged by the excesses of the Mauricians than Plato by those of the Neo-Platonists.

Those excesses were of two kinds. On the one hand shallow theologians, such as Farrar, preached a facile universalism, learned from Maurice, indeed, but leaving out his firm grip on essential truth, that sharp sword with which he sought to divide here and now the sin from the sinner. Judgment, he had said in *Theological Essays*, means discrimination, not the ultimate award of reward and

* *Essays on Freethinking and Plain Speaking*, by Leslie Stephen, pp. 21-23.

punishment. It is a process going on always in a man's heart, the arraignment of his acts and thoughts before his conscience. It entails greater, not less, heart searching, because it is now, not a process which can be deferred to the future.

On the other hand, those who can easily take refuge in comfortable words made much of his deductions from the Greek word *αἰώνιος*, and were encouraged to draw deductions of their own from derivations which would have horrified his scholarship. To identify peace with unity by deriving *εἰρήνη* from *εἰς ἓν*, as a distinguished woman educationalist was once heard to derive it, was enough to make Maurice turn in his grave. And it was by no means an isolated instance of the weak scholarship and loose logic that distinguished some of the Mauricians. But, after all, the Browning Societies, of which the Mauricians were nearly always devoted members, committed many crimes of word and thought for which poor Browning must not be held responsible. Perhaps prophets would be less often without honour, if they had fewer disciples !

It was not altogether Maurice's fault that he was addicted to verbiage ; that belonged to his age. Even the poets of the mid-Victorian time were long-winded, and was not its chief orator accused by Disraeli of being intoxicated with the exuberance of his own verbosity ? Poetic vagueness became the fashion, and because " honest doubt " had been declared more full of faith than " half the creeds," it began to believe itself intrinsically superior to the other half. That was

never the belief of Maurice. True, he acknowledged always what was good in his opponents' case; but he held fast to his own. No one was more scrupulous in his use of words. "If we know how to use them aright, they will not only supply us with convenient forms for communicating our thoughts to others, but they will actually teach us what our thoughts are and how to think. . . . In life and practice words are most real substantial things. . . . They go forth spreading good or mischief through society." We should expect no less from one who held so firmly and clearly the Platonic doctrine of the Logos, the "Creative Word" of John's Gospel.

He was, however, much misunderstood and by no means always wilfully. A scoffer said of him that his life was one long pursuit of "unattainable ends by inappropriate means." That, like most epigrams, went beyond the truth; but it must be admitted that much of his writing was of the tract variety, intended for the occasion, not always hitting the mark, tentative and sometimes, therefore, futile. With all humility he would strive, as he went along, to correct every error in his own thought, thereby often confusing both his followers and his opponents. When he failed, or thought he had failed, he began again with infinite labour. "There was the lavishness of the eternal world in all his efforts," says Hutton, "though there was all the humiliation of human inadequacy too." J. S. Mill says something like this, but with his own characteristic twist: "I have always thought that there was more

intellectual power wasted in Maurice than in any other of my contemporaries. Few of them certainly have had so much to waste. Great powers of generalisation, rare ingenuity and subtlety, and a wide perception of important and unobvious truths, served him not for putting something better into the place of the worthless heap of received opinion on the great subjects of thought, but for proving to his own mind that the Church of England knew everything from the first." Matthew Arnold, an unkindler critic and equally repelled by Maurice's defence of the Creeds and the Articles, called him "that pure and devout spirit—of whom, however, the truth must at last be told, that in theology he passed his life beating the bush with deep emotion and never starting the hare." Yet even Matthew Arnold had to own later that "on many young men of ability . . . he exercised a great attraction. Some of them have cleared themselves; and as they have cleared themselves they have come to regard Mr. Maurice as the author of all the convictions in which, after their ferment and struggle, they have found rest. . . . To Mr. Maurice it does honour to have made such disciples."

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The attracting power of Maurice's thought was never its negative freedom; it was its positive fearlessness. All his life he had but one aim, to know more of the nature of God and to do what in him lay to reveal by his life and his teaching what that knowledge involved in active service for humanity. The world was the Kingdom of Christ.

Its individual citizens were bound to comport themselves accordingly. The existing order of society was God's order. It was not to be overthrown from without but purified from within. Hence his reverence for authority, even for aristocracy and for episcopacy ; but hence also his outspoken denunciation of oppressors, his clinging to laws and ordinances as safeguards against the tyranny of individuals.

J. A. Froude, J. R. Green, Leslie Stephen, Stopford Brooke and many another might feel impelled to renounce their Orders, or to seek greater liberty outside the Church of England ; not so Maurice. He died as he had lived, faithful to the Church of his adoption, but refusing to belong to any sect or party in it, even to " the party inscribing ' no party ' on its banners," the very existence of which was so largely due to his teaching and influence. He loved, as Robertson said of him, " to find out the ground of truth on which an error rests, and to interpret what it blindly means, instead of damning it." That is the true spirit of tolerance, the very first condition of real free thinking.

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MATTHEW ARNOLD.
From a photograph taken in New York.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

(1822 1888)

IF Maurice represents the rather indefinite suggestiveness of Cambridge theology at its best, Matthew Arnold was a typical son of Oxford. But the Oxford which he represents is a Liberal Oxford, not the theological battleground of Newman and the Tractarians, nor the troubled scene of Pusey and Liddon's attempts to shut the mouths of Essayists and Reviewers. Indeed, coming to maturity as he did when dogmatism was on the decline, his importance for free thought is largely that he combined recognition of the receding tide of faith with real reverence for tradition. To those who, like Clough, felt deeply the removal of ancient boundaries and yet were unprepared to advance with Huxley into scientific agnosticism, or with Leslie Stephen into agnostic rationalism—still less with Bradlaugh into militant atheism—Arnold, with his cult of sweetness and light, his belief in “the Eternal not ourselves which makes for righteousness,” was in his way as much of a “beacon” as his father before him.

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To understand him it is necessary to glance for a moment at that father, so great a figure in his time, not only in the educational world, but in

the world of Liberal opinions. Thomas Arnold's portrait was drawn in the first freshness of regret by his friend and favourite pupil, Dean Stanley. It has been re-drawn more than seventy years after his death with a satirical and unsympathetic pencil by Mr. Lytton Strachey, with that curious tendency towards the belittlement of all great figures which besets this brilliant writer. So on the one hand we have Stanley, endorsing Lord Coleridge's description of Arnold as "in mind vigorous, active, clear-sighted, industrious . . . ; delighting in dialectics, philosophy and history . . . ; in argument bold almost to presumption . . . ; in temper easily roused to indignation, yet more easily appeased . . . ; somewhat too little deferential to authority, yet loving what was good and great in antiquity the more ardently and reverently because it was ancient." A scholar and a historian, in fact, with the zeal of a reformer. On the other hand we have Mr. Strachey saying that Dr. Arnold "not only failed to effect a change (in the machinery of education), but deliberately adhered to the old system. . . . The earnest enthusiast who strove to make his pupils Christian gentlemen . . . has proved to be the founder of the worship of athletics and the worship of good form." At this rate Dr. Arnold was not only not a great man, he was not even a far-seeing schoolmaster !

No doubt something must be discounted from Stanley's reverential account ; but if a corrective is needed, may it not perhaps be better found in the son's recollections of his father, set down as

they are much later in life in familiar letters written with no thought of publication? "Papa's greatness consists in his bringing such a torrent of freshness into English religion by placing history and politics in connexion with it." So wrote Matthew in 1865; but he was thinking of the time, more than twenty years earlier, when Thomas Arnold delivered his Inaugural Lecture as Professor of Modern History to an Oxford still appealing, with the Tractarians, to the first four centuries only, or refusing, with the Evangelicals, to apply any test of historical criticism to the Scriptures at all. "In papa's time the exploding of the old notions of literal inspiration in Scripture, and the introducing of a truer method of interpretation, were the changes for which, here in England, the moment had come, and my dear old Methodist friend, Mr. Scott, used to say to the day of his death that papa and Coleridge might be excellent men, but that they had found and shown the rat-hole in the temple." What Dr. Arnold had done to let in light is conceded even by Mr. Strachey, who recounts how his efforts so alarmed W. G. Ward, that Ward went down to Rugby to point out to his old headmaster that he was heading straight for Strauss and the rationalising of the New Testament. And even Jowett, his admirer, said of him, "His peculiar danger was not knowing the world and character—not knowing where his ideas would take other people and ought to take himself."

Yet no one had a greater reverence for tradition. To his son he left the double legacy of cherishing

the classical spirit in literature, whilst combining it with zeal for a liberal education. He left other legacies too. He had himself been a distinguished scholar and a precocious one. He took a first-class in *Litteris Humanioribus* at eighteen, and won an Oriel fellowship at nineteen. Thueydides and Aristotle were his favourite authors. Indeed, Matthew would very likely have gone to Cambridge but for his father's reluctance to send him "to a University where he would lose the study of Aristotle." At the age of twenty-three Thomas Arnold took orders and married. He settled first at Laleham as a tutor to private pupils. Ten years later he was elected to the headmastership of Rugby. Henceforth his history belongs to the general history of education in England, and though it is easy to sneer at a schoolmaster and to smile at the high seriousness of a great educator, it is something to have stamped his personality, as Arnold stamped it, upon a whole generation. Perhaps his influence was best summed up by his distinguished successor, Dr. Pereival, who described him as "a great prophet among schoolmasters," the secret of whose power lay less in his ability as an instructor than in "his magnetic and commanding personality . . . part of the living forces of his time."

He had his gentler side, for all his prophetic sternness. In his own family he was the tender father and playfellow, the companion of country walks, the busy man who was never too busy to answer his children's questions and could work quite serenely whilst they played all round him

with their toys. A year after his election to the Oxford Professorship the call came to him in the early hours of a June Sunday—

“to tread
In the summer morning, the road
Of death, at a call unforeseen,”

And it is not only the poet in Matthew Arnold who recognises that to his father it was given—

“Many to save with thyself
And at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd ! to come
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.”
(*Rugby Chapel*, 1857.)

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From his father, then, Matthew inherited not only his scholarly tastes and his zeal for education, but his deep-seated family affections and the genuine love of religion, as distinct from dogma, which inspired his whole life. From some other source—Mrs. Humphry Ward says a Celtic source—he must have drawn his poetic gift, and from yet another his irony, so rare and so refreshing a quality in any writer, especially in an Englishman. Dr. Arnold had made Fox How in the Lake country the home of his leisure, so that his children grew up amid scenes of great natural beauty and in an atmosphere sacred to poetry. Here, after Thomas Arnold had been laid to rest in Rugby Chapel, the mother, to whom Matthew wrote about his work, his friends, his every interest, every week of his life, made a home for her children and her grandchildren up to her death in 1873. “I should like you to have seen and known my mother,” he wrote

a few days later to his friend, Lady de Rothschild. "She had a clearness and fairness of mind, an interest in things, and a power of appreciating what might not be in her own line, which were very remarkable, and which remained with her to the very end of her life." With all her reverence for her husband's greatness, she made no "blind attempt to rest in the form and letter of his words." She realised as clearly as her son that, had Dr. Arnold lived longer, his views would have developed. "The nearer I get to accomplishing the term of years which was papa's, the more I am struck with admiration at what he did in them. It is impossible to conceive him exactly as living now, amidst our present ideas, because those ideas he would have so much influenced." So Matthew writes in 1868 to his mother, a worthy mother of thinkers.

Amongst her sons and daughters and her friends there was considerable diversity of opinion. Her second son, Thomas, passed from free-thinking Liberalism to Roman Catholicism, left that faith again, and at the end of his life reverted to it. One daughter, Jane, married W. E. Forster, a Quaker. Another daughter, Mary, was a disciple of Maurice and married an Anglican clergyman. Stanley and Clough were frequent visitors; Harriet Martineau and the Wordsworths were near neighbours; Miss Brontë is also a recollection of Matthew Arnold's youth.

Being so fathered and reared in such an atmosphere of letters, no Arnold could well escape growing up with a literary bent. In Matthew it

was especially marked. He was sent by his father, himself an old Wykehamist, to Winchester at the age of thirteen; but for some reason, perhaps economy, he was removed and brought back to Rugby the following year. There his school education was completed under his father's eye, until he went up to Oxford, in 1841, with a Balliol scholarship.

The Tractarian controversy was at its height; but it seems to have left him quite untouched. Now and again he went to hear Newman preach, more from a love of beautiful language than from any zeal for, or against, the principles of the Tractarians. To Dr. Arnold they were "the Oxford Malignants," and Newman was the arch-deceiver. Matthew seems to have regarded them with indifference at that time, though thirty years later he wrote feelingly of Newman's "exquisite and delicate genius." Nor does he appear to have been much stirred by the Liberal movement for repealing the censure passed by Convocation on Dr. Hampden, the Regius Professor of Divinity. When later in life the author of *Literature and Dogma* recalled Hampden's attempt to draw attention to the very human and fallible elements in the Creeds, he must have remembered with sympathy that an offer to come up and vote on Hampden's side in 1842 was the last public action of Thomas Arnold's life.

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Poetry was Matthew's first love. He won the Newdigate in 1843 with a poem on "Cromwell." He mixed freely in the social world of Oxford and

belonged to a small debating society, "The Decade." But he had no very brilliant success in the Schools, though this was compensated by his being elected, like his father, to an Oriel Fellowship. He went back to Rugby for a couple of years as a classical master under Arnold's successor, Dr. Tait; but in 1847 he was made private secretary to the then Lord Lansdowne and so gained an entry into the larger London world where he was to be so pre-eminently at home.

With one side of his nature Arnold loved society; with another he loved solitude and Oxford—"that home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties." And pre-eminently he loved the view of Oxford from the hill and the country round Oxford, the sweet city of the "dreaming spires . . . lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night." "I cannot describe the effect which this landscape always has upon me," he wrote near the end of his life. He was never tired of recounting its beauties—"the stripling Thames," "the Cumnor cowslips," "the wood which hides the daffodil," "the shy Thames shore," "the Fyfield elm 'neath the mild canopy of English air, That lonely tree against the western sky." He goes back to it all in moments of deep feeling; it inspired his beautiful elegy on Clough; it is the earliest expression of the love of great rivers, which comes out again and again, not only in his poems, but in his familiar letters.

The close of "Sohrab and Rustum" is the classical passage:—

" But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land
Into the frosty starlight. . . .
Brimming and bright and large ; the sands begin
To hem his watery march and dam his streams,
And split his currents ; that for many a league
The shorn and parcelled Oxus strains along.
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer—till at last
The long'd for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea."

This love of water, so appropriate to a young lake-country poet who had sat at the feet of Wordsworth, breaks out again and again. He writes from Germany of the Rhine, "pale green water, no mud and a bed all stone, pebbles and sand, which gives one a sense of freshness and coolness one seldom has in Italy." And again, "But the great charm is the Rhine, like a long lake stretching through the country." Or he is praising the Jura streams, so "clear and beautiful, not like the snow water of the Alpine rivers," or regretting that he has missed seeing the Oder, or hymning the Danube, "magnificent, of a pale yellow colour, sweeping along." And in America the Mississippi and the "muddy Missouri" interested him more than any other feature of the landscape. Rivers were always to him what the sea was to Swinburne.

But it is not as a Nature poet that Arnold will longest be remembered. Mr. Frederic Harrison, in an illuminating criticism, points out that his most distinguishing characteristic is his *gnomic* quality, and that, classical as he is all through, it is

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in this that he comes nearest to the Greeks. As detached criticism this is admirably true. But Mr. Frederic Harrison, though far and away his best critic—for the most part Arnold has been most unfortunate in his critics—was a contemporary, and detachment comes easier to contemporaries. To the generation who were young and growing up when Arnold wrote "Thyrsis" and "The Scholar Gipsy," he seemed as the voice crying from the wilderness, the one who most had suffered and could, therefore—

"Tell us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes."

It is no doubt easy to overpraise the poet who has given perfect expression to the "sick fatigue, the languid doubt," which half a century ago had stricken a whole generation. But it is the Stoic quality of Arnold's thought, the lessons learnt from his close study of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, that seemed to bring to that generation just the stiffening it needed. "Resolute and pensive insight," Mr. Harrison attributes to him; the phrase could hardly be bettered. His poetry is austere, meditative, melancholy often with the melancholy of the Celtic imagination, derived from his Cornish mother and Irish grandmother.

His niece, Mrs. Humphry Ward, has emphasised this Celtic side of him. After speaking of the faces in Ireland of the "black Celt" type, which often reminded her of him, she goes on: "Nothing indeed at first sight could have been less romantic

or dreamy than his outer aspect. . . . He stood four-square—a courteous, competent man of affairs, an admirable inspector of schools, a delightful companion, a guest whom everybody wanted, and no one could bind for long. . . . Yet his poems show what was the real inner life and genius of the man; how rich in that very ‘emotion,’ ‘love of beauty and charm,’ ‘rebellion against fact,’ ‘spirituality,’ ‘melancholy,’ which he himself catalogued as the cradle gifts of the Celt. Crossed, indeed, always with the Rugby earnestness, with that in him which came to him from his father.”

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Such was Matthew Arnold when at twenty-five years old he established himself in London, and at twenty-seven years old gave to the world the little slim volume, *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems*, by A, which included “Mycerinus,” “The Forsaken Merman,” the sonnet on Shakespeare, and “Resignation,” with its picture of the poet—

“Before him he sees life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole—
That general life which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace;

“The life of plants, and stones, and rain,
The life he craves—if not in vain,
Fate gave, what chance shall not control,
His sad lucidity of soul.”

It is very typical Arnold, typical not only of the pedestrian effect of some of his hortatory poems and of the Wordsworthian influence, but ending with that entirely typical and happily chosen phrase, “his sad lucidity of soul.” Here, foreshadowed, is the founder of modern English

literary criticism, the incomparable phrase-maker, of whom Disraeli said that "he was the only living Englishman who had become a classic in his own lifetime."

The poems fell flat, unheeded by a generation in whom Arnold had still to awaken the first faint stirrings of critical appreciation. No better fate attended the second volume, *Empedocles on Etna*, or even the third, a reprint of what he thought best in the two earlier ones with the notable additions of "Sohrab and Rustum," "The Scholar Gipsy," and the lovely little "Requiescat." The poet had come to his own. Nothing that he wrote later surpasses these as pure poetry, though his maturer thought and genius for the elegiac form found fuller expression in "Thyrsis" or in "Dover Beach"—

"The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world."

But this was in 1867, many years later. In the interval Arnold had learned much from life and from work. He had married, in 1851, the daughter of Judge Wightman. In the same year he became one of His Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. As he often accompanied his father-in-law on circuit in the capacity of Marshal (he had actually been called to the Bar, though he never intended to practise), and as he had a Schools district which

included the non-Church schools in all the eastern counties and a great part of the Midlands, in Gloucester, Hereford and Monmouth, and most of Wales, he saw more of English provincial life than any of his literary contemporaries and was better qualified to distinguish between the "provincial note" and the thought "of the centre." He knew what hard work meant, and with what limited intelligences sweetness and light had to struggle. And it says volumes for his balance of mind, his high seriousness, his Hellenic spirit, that he emerged from this long struggle with "the dissidence of Dissent," the urbane, good-humoured ironist, the discriminating critic that he shows himself in his later writings. The man who was not crushed under the weight of eighty grammar papers a day could triumph over anything!

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Poetry kept his soul alive, not only his own poetry, but the close and critical study of the poets of all ages, necessitated by his appointment in 1857 to the Professorship of Poetry in Oxford. He held this Chair for ten years, ten eventful years in the history of English literature. For though there had been critics before Arnold—Dryden, Dr. Johnson, Southey, Hazlitt, to name only a few—there had been no one to lay down principles, to define the critical spirit, to teach us to "place" a work with due regard to the canons of world literature, to apply the same touchstone to all literary work. "That is the thing—to write what will *stand*." Johnson, with all his limitations,

will be found to *stand* a great deal better than Carlyle." (Letter to his sister, 1877.)

Arnold was the English Sainte-Beuve, a writer whom he admired almost beyond any. He could not devote his whole life, as Sainte-Beuve did, to criticism ; but into those Oxford lectures he concentrated the fruits of the systematic reading which, amid all the toils of official work and the distractions of society, he never allowed himself to omit. "The importance of reading, not slight stuff to get through the time, but the best that has been written, forces itself upon me more and more every year I live ; it is living in good company, the best company, and people are generally quite keen enough, or too keen, about doing that, yet they will not do it in the simplest and most innocent manner by reading. . . ."

The critic understood that first need of criticism, self-discipline. "I am glad to find that in the past year I have at least accomplished more than usual in the way of reading the books which at the beginning of the year I had put down to be read. I always do this, and I do not expect to read all I put down, but sometimes I fall much too short of what I proposed." And self-discipline had its reward, for in the great sorrows of his life, when death had snatched from him first his youngest and then his beloved eldest son, he found strength and consolation in his books, especially in Marcus Aurelius.

He set himself also the task of explaining to a surprised and half-uncomprehending world his views on criticism as well as his philosophy of life.

The Oxford professorship period had produced *Essays in Criticism*, as well as the lectures *On Translating Homer*, and *On the Study of Celtic Literature*. In the preface to *Essays in Criticism* he had played with the subject, jesting about the triumph of the Philistines and the young lions of the *Daily Telegraph* and the boredom of the middle classes. But it was in the first of the essays, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," that he laid down general principles.

The critic must cultivate disinterestedness, detachment, perpetual dissatisfaction with anything that falls short of his ideal. Criticism may be defined as "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." It is the business of the critical power "in all branches of knowledge. . . . to see the object as in itself it really is." To do this the critic must "establish an order of ideas." Upon the richness and marshalling of those ideas depends the worth of all creative effort. That is why Goethe is a greater poet than Byron. "Goethe knew life and the world, the poet's necessary subjects, much more comprehensively than Byron. He knew a great deal of them, and he knew them much more as they really are." And so we come to Arnold's famous definition of poetry as the criticism of life, a definition which has itself been fiercely criticised, but which to Arnold meant an interpretation of life with the best trained faculties of the highest creative imagination, working upon an ordered store of ideas. No doubt something in poetry eludes this definition, but only because

something in poetry eludes all definition. Should it be seriously contended that, for that reason, the definition is unsound? One is tempted to throw the burden of proof upon the objector and to challenge him to find a better definition. At any rate, even the objector will admit that it fits Arnold's own poetry.

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His philosophy of life he expounded more fully in *Culture and Anarchy*, and it is perhaps only with this book, published in 1869, that he begins to make a serious contribution to the literature of free thought, though his message was already foreshadowed both in his poetry and in his literary essays. He was working on the book through a year of sorrows, the year that saw the death of two of his six children, and he loved his children passionately. Four years later he lost another son, a boy of great promise, at the age of eighteen; only one son and his two daughters lived to grow up. But, with his own gift of critical detachment, he kept his private sorrows out of his work.

He claimed for his thought, as expressed in his poems, that it represented "on the whole the main movement of mind for the last quarter of a century." For *Culture and Anarchy* and its central theme—the need of a combination of Hellenism with Hebraism, and the loss to English intellectual life from the neglect of the first—he claimed that "the chapters on Hellenism and Hebraism are in the main so true that they will form a kind of centre for English thought and speculation on the matters treated in them."

There was always about Matthew Arnold an innocent satisfaction in his own work, which was so just as hardly to deserve the name of vanity, though vanity no doubt it appeared to his contemporaries. "Did you go to my lecture to-day?" he asked an Oxford lady at dinner. "No? That is a pity; it was very good." His friend, George W. E. Russell, speaks of "his childlike pleasure in his own performances" as "an endearing trait of character" and couples it with his love of children and of animals, his interest in flowers, his delight in pretty surroundings, good wine and good company. To Leslie Stephen, again, Arnold's was "the vanity, as distinguished from conceit," which "often implies a craving for sympathy and a confidence in the sincerity of your fellows" and "is in the main an amiable and attractive characteristic." But, doubtless, it had also its irritating quality, especially to members of the puzzled middle-classes, whom he pushed into such prominence and was never tired of goading. And it made him enemies in America, where he undertook a lecturing tour late in his life.

On the other hand he cherished an unconquerable hope that he would succeed in educating public opinion, and to that end he did not shrink from incurring unpopularity. "One cannot change English ideas so much as, if I live, I hope to change them, without saying imperturbably what one thinks and making a good many people uncomfortable. The great thing is to speak without a particle of vice, malice, or rancour." (Letter to

his mother, 1863.) To do him justice he was never malicious, except in the French sense of that word. Mischievous he might be, like his modern counterpart, Mr. George Bernard Shaw ; but his seriousness was less disguised, and he was incomparably less freakish.

With his favourite trick of seeming to entrench himself behind authority, he begins *Culture and Anarchy* by citing a forgotten book, Bishop Wilson's *Maxims of Piety and Christianity*, and praising the very English mixture of sincere ardour and unctious with downright honesty and good sense, which the Bishop exhibits. Next he goes on to define what he means by culture. Culture is "the pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know . . . the best which has been thought and said in the world, and, through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits." In other words, culture is criticism applied to life, not only to literature. It is "a study of perfection." In the phrase of Bishop Wilson, its aim is "to make reason and the will of God prevail." The cultured life is the ordered life, the life of reason, the exact opposite of that "freeborn Englishman's impulse to do as he likes" which has hitherto been the middle-class ideal of liberty.

The main "characters" of culture are beauty and intelligence, or, as Arnold prefers to call them, sweetness and light. The phrase became classic ; it is impossible now to think of culture in any other terms. Culture again shows its single-

mind love of perfection by its "flexibility," its resolute avoidance of anything like fanaticism. Take, for instance, the fanatical devotion to money-getting of industrialism. Culture points out that the future may benefit from it, but that the passing generation is sacrificed. Or take the growing devotion to athletics. Culture "congratulates the future, and hopes it will make a good use of its improved physical basis; but it points out that our passing generation of boys and young men is, meantime, sacrificed." Take freedom of speech. "Freedom of speech is necessary for the society of the future, but the young lions of the *Daily Telegraph* in the meanwhile are sacrificed." And so on, in every department of life, culture holds the balance and insists on the re-establishment of order and equipoise. It is the enemy of fierceness and of abstractions; it teaches that the really blessed thing is not to do as one likes, but "to like what right reason ordains, and to follow her authority."

Now, where in modern English society does this authority reside? Not in the upper classes, for aristocracies, as such, are inaccessible to ideas, and "one often wonders whether upon the whole earth there is anything so unintelligent, so unapt to perceive how the world is really going, as an ordinary young Englishman of our upper classes." Not in the middle-class, for "the middle-class is by its essence, as one may say, by its incomparable self-satisfaction . . . self-excluded from wielding an authority of which light is to be the very soul." And not in the working-class, as yet "still an

embryo, of which no one can quite foresee the final development."

Of these three classes—the Barbarians, the Philistines, and the Populace—English society consists, and nowhere does authority reside in them as they now are. It must be sought in them as they might become in an ordered State, in their best selves, enlightened by culture. This is yet far off; there is much need of the philosopher, for, as Bishop Wilson says, "the number of those who need to be awakened is far greater than that of those who need comfort." The hope for the future lies in this, that "in each class there are born a certain number of natures with a curiosity about their best self," and it is because these strive to make reason and the will of God prevail, because they are led, not by class spirit, but by *humane* spirit, that some sort of authority does arise, though it is far from being recognised and set up in our midst, as it should be in an ordered State.

Here speaks the educational enthusiast and political theorist, the admirer of Continental education. Matthew Arnold was no democrat. By taste and sympathy he was an aristocrat, but an educated one, and he believed in the necessity of government and the value of State action. France came nearest to his ideal, and Germany a good second. In England there is "too much unguided individual action," in America "no effective centres of high culture." But in his political judgments Arnold went frequently astray. In 1859 he was convinced that the French would always beat any number of Germans who came

into the field against them. The French "will never be beaten by any other nation but the English, for to every other nation they are in efficiency and intelligence decidedly superior." And this under the Second Empire! Later on (1885) he admired the Germans, for qualities with which we do not now credit them. "The troops are splendid; Sir E. Malet said it is a constant pleasure to look at them; and so it is. Not the least swagger or ferocity—on the contrary a generally quiet humane look; but such men and such discipline!"

America Arnold never understood. In 1862 he thought that it had "become indispensable to give the Americans a *moral lesson*," even at the cost of war, and comments on the weakness of British middle-class sympathy with them, in spite of "their common radicalness, dissentingness, and general mixture of self-assertion and narrowness." When he was travelling in America he was chiefly impressed by "the profound *Gemeinheit* of the ordinary American city." Indianapolis he notes as an exception, but most of the American towns "are so unfinished; they are like a new quarter still in the builders' hands." Life in America has the "capital defect" that "it is so uninteresting, so without savour and without depth." And the average American liked Arnold as little as Arnold liked America.

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As a social philosopher Arnold was all in favour of the ordered life; as a thinker he was a Hellenist. But in religion he had even more than an average

Englishman's share of the Hebraic spirit, only he brought to bear upon it his Hellenistic sense of clearness and order. What, he asks in *Literature and Dogma*, is the special message to mankind of the Hebrew race and the Hebrew scriptures? And he answers his question in the one word, *righteousness*. This is "the master-word of the Old Testament;" it is because "Israel had the true idea that *righteousness* is saving, that to *conduct* belongs happiness," that Israel deserved to be called the chosen people, "the friend and elect of the Eternal." And what is the message of the New Testament? Surely the method and secret of Jesus, his method listening to conscience, his secret self-renunciation, and both recommended to his hearers by the "sweet reasonableness," the *ἐπιείκεια* of his character.

In its essence, its imaginative grasp, Matthew Arnold's religion is the religion of a poet and of a scholar, of one who can discriminate between scientific and literary language, "the language of poetry and emotion, approximative language, thrown out, as it were, at certain great objects which the human mind augurs and feels after, but not language accurately defining them." Still it is impossible to read *Literature and Dogma* without seeing that underlying the literary artifice, the beautiful phrase-making, the clear pellucid way of dealing faithfully with vulgar errors, is a deep sense of the soul's need to find a sure guide for conduct. And it is just because Arnold strove with all his great gifts of clearness of thought and power of exposition to free mankind from false

guides, that he deserves to be remembered as a leader of free thought.

His writings on religion have been fiercely attacked, not only by the orthodox or the fanatical. Some of the judgments are hard to understand, notably Mr. Saintsbury's opinion, that "*Literature and Dogma*, though his most popular, is quite his worst book." It is not at all difficult to see that Matthew Arnold's wit, the *persiflage* which he never could resist, would alienate many serious readers, especially in a generation less accustomed than ours to lightness in literary method. Like all wits—M. Anatole France and Mr. Shaw are conspicuous contemporary instances—he sometimes ran amuck, as in the illustration of the three Lord Shaftesburys and the Council of the Trinity, which he afterwards withdrew. No doubt, when he railed at the Bishops of Winchester and Gloucester for wanting "to do something for the Godhead of the Eternal Son," he shocked those who did not share his burning indignation against dogmatic theologians for setting stumbling blocks in the way of the simple. And when he defined the Athanasian Creed as "learned science with a strong dash of violent and vindictive temper," he upset the average churchgoer as much as Mr. Shaw upset the Censor by the coarse outspokenness of the converted horse thief, Blanco Posnet. But that a trained critic could read *Literature and Dogma* and explain its popularity only as the expression "of a prevalent tendency," or describe it as giving to its generation not the religion which that generation wanted, seems

almost a wilful misreading of Arnold's message and fails entirely to account for Arnold's influence. R. H. Hutton better "hits the mark," when he puts Arnold beside Newman, the one "far and away the most characteristic and influential Oxonian of the second quarter" of the nineteenth century, "the other the most characteristic and influential Oxonian of its third quarter."

Looked at as mere literature, what beauty of style in this book, what clearness of argument, what a wealth of striking phrases! The definition of religion as "morality touched with emotion," with conduct as its object—"and conduct is three-fourths of life;" the statement that "certainty and grandeur are really and truly characters of Christianity;" the repudiation of unworthy conceptions of God "as a magnified and non-natural man—Mansel's Moral Governor of the universe"; the tentative definition of the Godhead as "for *science* the stream of tendency, whereby all things seek to fulfil the law of their being"—have not all these interwoven themselves into the very texture of modern thought on religion until we have almost forgotten their source? And has any one ever done more than Arnold did to bring home to his countrymen the exceeding beauty of the Bible, its thought and its language? Did he not, even in his official capacity, insist upon its inestimable value in the schools, and that not only as a training in language but as a sure guide to conduct?

It would seem almost impossible, but for certain

conspicuous instances to the contrary, to read Arnold's theological books, in conjunction with the self-revelation of his letters, without recognising a soul profoundly and naturally religious, whose jesting on religious subjects was but the freedom of the man, who has so sure a hold on essentials that he can afford to play with accidents. Of course his manner gave offence, and sometimes he meant it to do so. He defends himself on this point in a letter to his sister (Nov., 1874): "I write in the manner which is natural to me; the manner has, no doubt, its weak points. But ponderous works produce no effect; the religious world which complains of me would not read me if I treated my subject as they say it ought to be treated, and I want them, indeed, to read me as little as they please; but I do not mean them to prescribe a mode of treatment of my subject to me which would lead to my being wholly ineffective both with them and with every one else. For it is my belief, at any rate, that I give something positive, which to a great many people may be of the very greatest comfort and service. And this is in part my answer to what you say about treating with lightness what is matter of life and death to so many people. There is a levity which is altogether evil; but to treat miracles and the common anthropomorphic ideas of God as what one may lose and yet keep one's hope, courage and joy, as what are not really matters of life and death in the keeping or losing of them, this is desirable and necessary, if one holds, as I do, that the common anthropomorphic ideas of God and the

reliance on miracles must and will inevitably pass away."

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That "miracles do not happen" was Matthew Arnold's starting point in his attempt to safeguard Christianity against the onslaughts of Mr. Bradlaugh and the more radical freethinkers. He belonged to the age which set such store on verification, and, rightly or wrongly, he believed it possible to verify by experience that the pursuit of righteousness, the knowledge of the secret of Jesus, brings with it satisfaction, happiness, the sense of "hitting the mark." This phrase gives great offence to Mr. Saintsbury; but it is only an Arnoldian version of the Aristotelian doctrine that the right exercise of function is accompanied by pleasure, and that the pleasure is proof of the rightness. What was the secret of Jesus? "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Go and try, Arnold says to the doubter. "It is so; try it yourself and you will see it is so, by the sense of going right, hitting the mark, succeeding, living, which you will get."

Reasoning backwards, then, from the truth of religion as lived perfectly by Jesus, imperfectly by His followers, you arrive at a true conception of the value of the books of the Bible, whatever may be the fallibility of the recorders, or the chequered history of the records. It is by no means necessary to conclude that, because Colenso threw doubts upon the arithmetical accuracy of Genesis, the Old Testament does not contain truths

necessary to salvation. Round all truth clings accretion, legend, extra-belief—what Matthew Arnold calls *Aberglaube*, what the Church of Rome calls “pious opinions.” Miracles to Arnold are *Aberglaube*, as harmless at first as fairy tales, but, if indulged in to excess, like a diet of opium, destructive to the taste for the far grander world of reality. And the problem he set himself was to free Christianity from those accretions and to justify Jesus and His message, not by the miracles that He did, or by any miraculous conception of His coming into the world or leaving it, but by the essential truth of His teaching when tried by the touchstone of experience.

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No one, however, knew better than Arnold that rationalising, once introduced, goes often further than the rationaliser cares to follow it. It must be granted to Mr. Saintsbury and his other critics that the weak point in Arnold's reformed Christianity is its evasion of the question as to whether Jesus differed in kind, or only in degree, from other great teachers. Arnold never answers that question; he does not even raise it, except by implication, when he denies the necessity of believing, with the *Guardian*, in “the miracle of the Incarnation,” or when he quotes the belief in Christ's bodily resurrection as an instance of *Aberglaube*. He is concerned, he says, not to destroy but to construct. He does not want to dogmatise, with the metaphysicians and the creed-makers, as to the Godhead of the Eternal Son. He only wishes to save the Bible as a guide for conduct from

“ Mr. Bradlaugh, who imagines that the method and secret of Jesus, nay, and Jesus Himself too, are all baneful, and that the sooner we get rid of them the better.”

He defends himself seriously against Professor Huxley, who told the London School Board that “ if these islands had no religion at all, it would not enter into his mind to introduce the religious idea by the agency of the Bible.” And he makes play with “ the German philosopher, who writes to us from Texas, reproaching us with wasting our time over the Bible and Christianity, ‘ which are certainly disappearing from heart and mind of the cultured world.’ ” But he was deeply concerned to save the Bible, if it could be saved. “ Taking the Old Testament as Israel’s magnificent establishment of the theme: Righteousness is salvation! Taking the New as the perfect elucidation by Jesus of what righteousness is and how salvation is won, I do not fear comparing even the power over the soul and imagination of the Bible, taken in this sense—a sense which is at the same time solid—with the like power in the old materialistic and miraculous sense for the Bible, which is not.” And again, “ The indispensableness of the Bible and of Christianity cannot be exaggerated. . . . The religious language of the human race . . . is materialised poetry. . . . That it has long moved and deeply engaged the affections of men, that the Christian generations before us have all passed that way, adds immensely to its worth as poetry.” The religious consciousness of humanity has produced, indeed, besides ideas, beautiful imaginations,

which, with all that is founded upon them, must dissolve ; but Christianity will live, " because it depends upon a true and inexhaustibly fruitful idea, the idea of death and resurrection as conceived and worked out by Jesus," not as materialised by His disciples.

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In what sense, then, was Matthew Arnold a freethinker ? He has himself supplied the answer in the Preface to *God and the Bible*. " The free-thinking of one age is the common sense of the next. . . . We live at the beginning of a great transition which cannot well be accomplished without confusion and distress. I do not pretend to operate a general change of religious opinion. . . . ' One man's life, what is it ? ' says Goethe ; but even one man in his short term may do something to ease a severe transition, to diminish violent shocks in it, and bitter pain."

In estimating the value of his effort, it must be remembered that he lived in a period of violent and outspoken atheism. Quite apart from vulgar tub-thumpers, such a brilliant and cultivated man of science as Professor Clifford could allow himself to call Christianity " that awful plague which has destroyed two civilisations," and could urge his hearers to show no tenderness to " the slender remnant of a system which has made its red mark on history and still lives to threaten mankind. Even the grotesque forms of its intellectual belief," he added, " have survived the discredit of its moral teaching." Such language is now out of fashion ; even a Hyde Park orator

would not find it a draw. But is it fanciful to suggest that Arnold did a good deal to discredit it, that the atmosphere of culture, urbanity, sweet reasonableness, which he diffused, inclined men's minds to toleration ?

The tide of Biblical criticism has swept far beyond his limits. The free-thinking of a later age than his is now our "common sense." Men might be less inclined to-day to agree with him as to the possibility of participating in religious language and worship when belief in the Creeds has gone. But they cannot cease to be grateful to him for his insistence that "nations and men, whoever is shipwrecked, is shipwrecked on conduct. It is the God of Israel steadily and irresistibly asserting Himself; the Eternal that loveth righteousness." Can the generation which has seen a great European kingdom shipwreck itself on conduct let go its belief, however that belief may express itself, that the world is governed by righteousness, that the Judge of all the Earth doeth right ?

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Matthew Arnold died, as he would have wished, in the full tide of work and of activity. He was on his way to meet his elder daughter, arriving from America, when he was struck down by the same heart trouble which had killed his father. He had had premonitions. Even as early as 1868 the sense often came to him that his time was short. He writes, after the death of his baby son, in his own forty-fifth year: "And so this loss comes . . . with so much other 'suffering in the flesh'—the departure of youth, cares of many

kinds, an almost painful anxiety about public matters—to remind me that *the time past of our life may suffice us . . .* that we ‘should no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.’ However different the interpretation we put on much of the facts and history of Christianity, we may unite in the bond of this call.”

He lived twenty years longer. In 1887 he wrote to a friend, “One should try to bring oneself to regard death as a quite natural event. . . . For my part since I was sixty I have regarded each year, as it ended, as something to the good beyond what I could naturally have expected. This summer in America I began to think that my time was really coming to an end, I had so much pain in my chest, the sign of a malady which had suddenly struck down in middle life, long before they came to my present age, both my father and grandfather.” He was not mistaken. He lived to come home and to spend one more year in his pleasant Surrey garden, to write about Shelley, to compose an address on Milton, and to lecture on American civilisation, or want of civilisation. On April 10th he is rejoicing in the flock of sheep in his paddock and speaking of the delight which the black-faced lambs will be to his baby granddaughter. A week later he was dead.

“Rather, it may be, over-much
He shunned the common stain and smutch,
From soilure of ignoble touch
Too grandly free,
Too loftily secure in such
Cold purity.

" But he preserved from chance control
The fortress of his 'stablisht soul ;
In all things sought to see the whole ;
 Brooked no disguise ;
And set his heart upon the goal,
 Not on the prize."

(In *Laleham Churchyard*, 1890.)

By W. WATSON.

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CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

*From the painting by Mr. Walter Sickert, in the possession
of the National Liberal Club.*

CHARLES BRADLAUGH
(1833-1891)

THE contrast between Arnold, the cultured apologist for the Bible, and Bradlaugh, the uncompromising atheist who for years fought his hardest to dethrone the Bible, could hardly be more striking. There was nothing Hellenistic about Bradlaugh. He had had no chance as a boy to acquire even the elements of culture. Self-trained, self-schooled, except for his training in the world's hard school of adversity, he brought to his lifelong fight against superstition and the tyranny of established opinion as finely tempered a Hebraic spirit as any of the old Hebrew prophets. In one thing only he agreed with Arnold—in his high estimate of conduct. To Arnold it was three-fourths of life, to Bradlaugh it was the whole. Mercy and loving-kindness he might at times forget in the heat of the struggle; justice and uprightness never. There was no more unflinching upholder of the truth, as he conceived it, than the man who throughout his life was ceaselessly vilified and unblushingly traduced by too many of those who profess and call themselves Christians.

It was indeed a hard school in which Charles Bradlaugh learned his early lessons. The son of a solicitor's clerk and a nursemaid, his childhood

was passed in mean and narrow surroundings. There were other children to keep, and the father's salary, even after upwards of twenty years of faithful service, was not much above £2 a week. A small flower garden was the only amenity of his home, and an occasional fishing expedition to the river Lea almost his only recreation. Toys were far too expensive a luxury. Worn-out steel nibs had to serve the boy for soldiers, and actors cut out of newspapers played his childish dramas. At seven years old he went to a national school, where the headmaster had stern ideas as to corporal punishment. For a short time longer he attended a small private school. At eleven he became office boy to his father's employers at a wage of five shillings a week. With the pence saved out of his bus fares by running his errands on foot he bought the only books he could get. It was a red-letter day, indeed, when a kindly secretary gave him a bun and a half-crown; he never forgot it.

At fourteen he was promoted to be wharf clerk and cashier to some coal merchants in the City Road. He began to frequent Bonner's Fields and to get his first lessons in politics. Religious doubt had not yet begun to dawn for him—after all he was but at an age when happier boys are in their first term at Eton! Regular attendance at the Sunday School of St. Peter's, Hackney Road, had won him promotion from scholar to teacher. That year he was to be confirmed, and by his vicar's instructions he began to learn the Thirty-nine Articles and to study the Gospels closely.

He took his New Testament seriously and very soon found, like maturer thinkers, that it is no easy matter to harmonise even the Synoptists, and still harder to reconcile them with John.

He wrote to the vicar for help and explanation. The vicar replied by suspending him for three months and informing his father of his "atheistical" tendencies. Then began a course of home "persuasion," not far removed from persecution. Texts were obtruded upon his notice. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" faced him in large letters as he sat at meals. He was made to feel an outcast and an alien. Small wonder that he soon decided to become an outcast indeed.

It seems almost incredible that any sane man should have thought such treatment likely to bring a proud and spirited lad to reason. Nor were blank Sundays of exclusion from school and church calculated to drive him anywhere except to the open-air discussions in Bonner's Fields. There he began as a defender of orthodoxy, but soon became converted to deism and finally took the logical last step to philosophic atheism. Meanwhile the vicar had not been idle. He frequently visited the family and at length persuaded the father to tell the boy's employers that, if within three days his son had not recanted his opinions, he would no longer be security for him. Whether the threat was meant seriously or not, the boy took it so. He packed his belongings, kissed his little sister and turned his back on his home for many years.

Fortunately he had made some friends amongst

100 FREETHINKERS OF THE SIXTH CENTURY

the Chartists and Freethinkers. An old man, B. B. Jones, took him in for a week. Later Mrs. Carlile, the widow of the Richard Carlile who had suffered so sorely for his opinions, allowed him to share her son's bed and to have a place at her table. But for this he might have starved. Often enough he went hungry, for he was to learn only too well what mercy the religious world of mid-Victorian days meted out to the candid unbeliever. With a splendid audacity he decided to start as a coal dealer without a penny of capital. He had to get his customers to pay him in advance, and few there were who would trust him. Still he earned enough to buy bread and cheese and even to get a few cards printed, one of which with boyish bravado he slipped under his father's door.

One scarcely knows whether to laugh or to cry at the story of Charles Bradlaugh, "coal merchant," sixteen years of age, and his principal customer. She was a jolly, good-natured baker's wife, whose needs had brought him in ten shillings a week, until some one told her that the boy was "an infidel." He tried for a time to evade her questions—small blame to him! But she pressed him too hard and repudiated his heretic fuel. "I should be afraid that my bread would smell of brimstone!"

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But for the kindness of Mrs. Carlile things would then have gone very hard with him. His friendship with her helped him not only materially. It brought him also into the direct line of English free-thought, which begins with the eighteenth-

century deists and continues through Tom Paine and *The Age of Reason*, Carlile, Thomas Cooper the Chartist, and G. J. Holyoake, down to the great struggle of the 'eighties, when Bradlaugh finally vindicated a man's right to hold any public position, whatever might be his religious opinions.

Such victories are not won without suffering. Paine, the translator into practical politics of English deism, had been applauded for *The Rights of Man* both in the New World and the Old. Pitt, indeed, with the fear of the French Revolution before him, felt obliged to take measures to suppress the book, though he told Lady Hester Stanhope that Paine was in the right in his advocacy of a progressive income tax, provision for education and the breaking up of large estates. But when Paine wrote *The Age of Reason* and dared to ridicule accepted doctrines as superstitious, he paid with ten months in prison for his belief that "all religions are in their nature mild and benign" unless associated with politics. So dangerous was it both then and now—witness the Conscientious Objectors—to attack an established opinion.

Carlile fared even worse. The son of a Devonshire shoemaker and apprenticed as a boy to a tinman, he was first turned to radicalism by reading Paine's *Rights of Man*. He began to disseminate radical literature and went to prison for eighteen months for his own *Political Litany*. He brought out Paine's theological works and, in default of paying the extravagant fine of £1500, spent three years in prison, whence he issued a periodical, *The Republican*, for continuing which his wife, too,

suffered two years' imprisonment. All who helped him met with the same fate. The prosecutions went on for over four years. But, nothing daunted, the brave freethinker continued his propaganda. He went twice to prison for refusing to pay church rates, and when he died, at the age of fifty-three, he had spent over nine years of his life in His Majesty's gaols.

Mrs. Sharples-Carlile, who both before and after her union with Carlile had been his ardent disciple, was not legally married to him. He had been separated from his first wife, and, as this obstacle to remarriage could not legally be removed, he and Miss Sharples, who had already shown her spirit by bringing out a paper dedicated to "The young women of England for generations to come or until superstition is extinct," decided to live together without benefit of clergy. It was not from any desire to flout either the law or public opinion. "We passed over a legal obstacle," she says, "only because it could not be removed, and not in a spirit of violation of the law, nor of intended offence or injury to any one." All this had happened many years previously. When Bradlaugh knew her she was a widow, and he was but a year or two older than her daughter, Hypatia, for whom he conceived a boyish but fleeting attachment, which Hypatia laughed out of court. Nevertheless, there were not wanting those who tried to put a scandalous interpretation upon these most natural and innocent happenings.

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The story of what Richard Carlile had done to

win freedom for the press must have been vividly presented to the boy's mind. An older free-thinker, G. J. Holyoake, who himself went to prison in 1842 for maintaining the right to inquire into the attributes and existence of the Deity, thus sums up Carlile's achievement: "He not only resisted the fetters upon the press, but inspired others to resist. He wrote heretical books, delivered lectures, and by his pen, his speech, and in his person maintained the conflict, until he established a free press No publisher in any country ever incurred so much peril to free the press as Richard Carlile. Every British bookseller has profited by his intrepidity and endurance. Speculations of philosophy and science, which are now part of the common intelligence, power, and profit, would have been stifled to this day but for him."

Yet this was the man who was haled by the Crown before the Judges of the King's Bench and declared by the Attorney-General to have reviled that "Christianity which is undoubtedly a part of the common law of the land," and concerning which the Gentlemen of the Jury were to decide whether or not "it was a fabulous imposture." What a responsible decision to submit even to twelve good men and true! They were, however, adjured—"by your hopes of happiness here and hereafter"—to affirm by their verdict the truth of that religion "on which the proper administration of public justice depends," belief in which they were said to have proved by taking the jury oath. And by this colossal *petitio principii* they were

persuaded to give a verdict, which allowed the judge to assess the value of Christianity at a fine of £1500.

And what was Carlile's offence? Not any utterance of his own, but the mere giving to the world of Paine's contentions that "to charge the commission of acts upon the Almighty" (such as some of the Old Testament massacres) "we must unbelieve all our belief in the moral justice of God," or that the Gospels "are altogether anecdotal. They relate events after they had taken place. . . . Revelation is necessarily out of the question with respect to these books; not only because of the disagreement of the writers, but because revelation cannot be applied to the relating of facts by the persons who saw them done, nor to the relating or recording of any discourse or conversation by those who heard it." This was blasphemy in 1822. By 1922 might it not be the sober utterance of some learned Dean or Bishop? But Carlile was an "infidel" and an "atheist," a person who, like Bentham, left his body to science to be dissected. Such a proceeding, in the 'forties, shocked the pious as suggesting a disbelief in the resurrection of the body. Did not the same suspicion attach to the first advocates of cremation, according to those who preferred to forget, or ignore, Paul's distinction between bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial?

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With George Jacob Holyoake, the future co-operator, the boy, Bradlaugh, was soon acquainted. They were to have much in common. Holyoake

had suffered three weeks' imprisonment in 1841 for refusing to swear to his own recognisances. "What does it matter how many gods you swear by," he says he was asked by the governor of the prison, "since you do not appear to believe in any?" Similarly, forty years later, a prominent speaker in the Bradlaugh debate cried out in the House: "You know, Mr. Speaker, we all of us believe in a God of some sort or another," a confession only paralleled in its *naïveté* by Lord Henry Lennox's admission that it suited the purpose of the Conservatives to annoy the Liberals by "putting that damned Bradlaugh at them."

Full of sympathy for a younger victim of intolerance, Holyoake took the chair on October 10th, 1850, at a lecture delivered by Charles Bradlaugh, jun., who undertook (at the age of seventeen!) to discourse on "The Past, Present, and Future of Theology." "He looked more like fourteen," writes Holyoake, "but he spoke with readiness, confidence, and promise." And after the meeting a collection was made for "Charles Bradlaugh, victim of the Rev. J. E. Packer, of St. Peter's, Hackney Road."

In later years the two freethinkers collaborated for a while upon the paper, the *National Reformer*; but Holyoake was a difficult man to work with. He had before let Bradlaugh down by suddenly stopping the publication, in fortnightly parts, of his commentary on *The Bible: what it is? Being an examination thereof from Genesis to Revelation*, when it had progressed no farther than Adam and Eve. He was afraid Bradlaugh would go to

extremes, and it is characteristic of the difference between the two that, though both alike were "atheists"—in the sense of refusing to affirm the existence of a God of whom they had no proof—Holyoake always shirked the name. He called himself a secularist, whilst Bradlaugh claimed his right to share in the opprobrium attaching to those, who, like Paine and Carlile, were proud to call themselves atheists and infidels.

It is sad to have to record that this difference seems to have rankled in Holyoake's mind, so that in the thick of Bradlaugh's great fight in Parliament he wrote a letter to a correspondent, saying that "Mr. Bradlaugh had taken the oath a score of times before, and would doubtless do so now," and omitting to mention that such oath-taking was in courts of law before unbelievers had been given the right of affirmation. The utterance did Bradlaugh harm, and this stab in the back from a former colleague and fellow freethinker was a deep grief to him.

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Bradlaugh came into direct contact with Thomas Cooper only in Cooper's converted days. The history of the celebrated Chartist poet was full of ups and downs. Beginning as the son of a widow who gained a precarious livelihood in Gainsborough by home dyeing and making cardboard boxes, the boy, who was extraordinarily gifted and had a passion for books, was by turns cobbler, schoolmaster, journalist, preacher and political agitator. During an imprisonment in Stafford gaol, for supposed participation in a Chartist riot

in 1842, he wrote his *Purgatory of Suicides*. When he emerged from prison he found he had passed from pious Methodism to atheism, and that it was his deep sympathy with the poor and oppressed which had wrought the change. Small wonder that the man who found the stocking-weavers of Leicester working for a wage of four and sixpence a week, *with deductions*, should doubt of the ways of Providence in a Christian land.

It recalls a story, which Holyoake relates, of a young workman who, somewhere about 1830, was found removing a file, worth sevenpence, from one of the engineering shops at meal-time. He had not taken the file away; he may, or may not, have intended to take it; but he was apprehended and *transported for ten years* on the sole evidence of his master. Who can wonder that incidents like these lighted a flame in England, which shall never be extinguished, as long as free men can use free speech, as Bradlaugh used it, to cry aloud for justice?

But Cooper had not Bradlaugh's inflexibility of purpose. For some eight or ten years he lectured as a freethinker, dealing especially with Strauss' *Leben Jesu*. Then suddenly it came to him that he was "ignoring the right foundation of morals—the existence of the Divine Moral Governor," and he told his freethinking audience in the Hall of Science, City Road, without any preparation, that to this Moral Governor "they should have to give up their account, and receive His sentence in a future state." The audience, at first dumbfounded, broke out into a storm

of reproaches. Cooper turned to Kingsley and Maurice for help and sympathy and took up work again as a lecturer on Christian evidences. In this capacity he met Bradlaugh in debate in 1864.

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That debate, however, was fourteen years after Bradlaugh's first public appearance. Much had happened in the meantime to strengthen his character and develop his intellectual capacity. By then he had come to hold a leader's baton in the army of the Freethinkers. But he had nearly gone under, and at the end of 1850 was driven by a debt of £4 15s., which he saw no chance of ever paying, to enlist in another kind of army. Often enough that winter he had gone about looking absolutely hungry—so his daughter was told by her maternal grandfather, who loved and admired his future son-in-law, "the young enthusiast." And he was the soul of honour and honesty in money matters; that quality was characteristic of him all through his life. So when he saw a poster offering a bounty of £6 10s. to recruits, who should offer themselves for the East India Company's Service, he went on a bitter December day into a bar, where the recruiting sergeants congregated, and volunteered. There was some complicated barter between the sergeants, which finally resulted in his joining the 7th Dragoon Guards. There was a final visit to his home and a semi-reconciliation. Then he crossed to Dublin and for three years served in the ranks as an ordinary private.

Only he was no ordinary private, this pale, thin, threadbare recruit, who was "ragged" on the

voyage, had his Greek lexicon and Arabic vocabulary snatched out of his box and kicked about the deck, and yet made his mark then and there by standing up to the captain of the ship, who was trying to cheat the seasick recruits out of the money he had promised them for helping to shift the cargo. "To the unutterable surprise of everyone," says Mr. Headingley, "he delivered a fiery, menacing, unanswerable harangue . . . concluding with the appalling threat of a letter to the *Times*!" In later years, when his legal training had advanced, it would have been a writ or summons. Any way the threat and the speaker reduced the captain to speechless amazement, and the recruits got their money.

There are other typical incidents of his soldiering days. He was an ardent advocate of teetotalism and met the offer of a glass of port from his quartermaster's daughter with a temperance harangue. He wrote a letter to an insolent army chaplain, who had asserted that one of his sermons was beyond the understanding of the soldiers, in which he dissected the sermon and pointed out its inaccuracies and illogical arguments. He headed a band of soldiers and villagers in demolishing a gate, which barred a right of way, and wrote on the remains, "Pulled up by Charles Bradlaugh, C. 52, VII. D.G." But though the landlord complained to the superior officers, they told him to be sure he had the law on his side, "as Private Bradlaugh generally knew what he was about."

One piteous experience he never forgot, and he related it many years later when speaking in

New York. He was one of a troop sent to protect the law officers on the occasion of an eviction near Innis-carra. "It was a miserable day—rain freezing into sleet as it fell—and the men beat down wretched dwelling after wretched dwelling, some thirty or forty perhaps. . . . We had got our work about three parts done, when out of one of them a woman ran and flung herself on the ground, wet as it was, before the captain of the troop, and she asked that her house might be spared—not for long, but for a little while. She said her husband had been born in it; he was ill of the fever, but could not live long, and she asked that he might be permitted to die in it in peace. Our captain had no power; the law agent from Dublin wanted to get back to Dublin; his time was of importance, and he would not wait; and that man was carried out while we were there—in front of us, while the sleet was coming down—carried out on a wretched thing (you could not call it a bed), and he died there while we were there; and three nights afterwards, while I was sentry on the front gate at Ballincollig Barracks, we heard a cry, and when the guard was turned out we found this poor woman there a raving maniac, with one dead babe in one arm and another in the other, clinging to the cold nipple of her lifeless breast. And," added the Bradlaugh of 1873, "if you had been brothers to such a woman, sons of such a woman, fathers of such a woman, would not rebellion have seemed the holiest gospel you could have preached?"

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He was soon to be free to preach that gospel. A legacy from a great-aunt, who died in 1853, one year after his father's death, enabled him to purchase his discharge from the army. He came home, but the only work he could get at first was an office boy's place at ten shillings a week with a Mr. Rogers, a solicitor of sense and courage, who soon promoted Bradlaugh and paid no heed to anonymous letters denouncing his clerk's infidel opinions. He merely asked that propaganda should be kept apart from law business, and Bradlaugh respected the wish. All his anti-theological writings appeared over the pseudonym of "Iconoclast," which he was soon to make famous.

He had married Susannah Hooper, and he had to work very hard. The young couple began on about £100 a year and the £30 damages won by Bradlaugh in an action for false imprisonment against a solicitor, who had had him locked up for removing some books which he was legally entitled to fetch. They lived at first as lodgers with Bradlaugh's mother, and afterwards at Bethnal Green. The young wife was good-natured and open-handed. Two daughters were born and one son. There was happiness for a short time; but intemperance and extravagance broke up the home, and all Bradlaugh's gentleness and forbearance proved in vain. In 1870, after fifteen years of marriage, the mother and the two girls went to live with the maternal grandfather, the boy remaining at school. It was not till 1877 that Mrs. Bradlaugh died.

Of all this Bradlaugh never spoke or wrote, bitter and malignant as were the slanders levelled against him because of his separation from his wife. But his daughter, who had the best of reasons for knowing the truth, has vindicated him in her story of his life. His boy, who was very promising, died young, and the loss hit Bradlaugh hard ; but he set his teeth, attended in court in a suit on which he was engaged both that day and the next, and kept his grief to himself. His relations with his daughters were of the happiest. It was their pride and their pleasure to come and stay with him and be his secretaries, and after their mother's death they made their home with him. He was good, too, to brothers and sisters of his own, to one brother in particular, who repaid him by ceaseless annoyance and the circulation of malicious falsehoods. But poverty and a simplicity of life, enforced though not unwelcome, were his lot all through. When he had to provide separately for his wife in the country, he took for himself two tiny rooms in the East End, and kept only the worst and most unsaleable of his furniture. The rest went to provide funds. Even in the later years of comparative ease in the upper part of a house in Circus Road, St. John's Wood, he occupied a bedroom with just room for sheer necessities, and his large library was furnished only with books, writing-desk and wooden chairs, with, as a concession to ill-health, one easy-chair. He dined down in the basement in a dark room surrounded by blue-books. The constant litigation in which his opponents involved him left him seldom clear

of debt, and he would never accept money, except for public purposes. But no friend turned to him in vain, and he gave shelter for years to James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, bearing with his frequent fits of drunkenness and consequent illnesses.

Mrs. Besant has put on record her early impression of "his extreme courtesy in private life, especially to women. This outward polish, which sat so gracefully on his massive frame and stately presence, was foreign rather than English. . . . I asked him once where he had learned his gracious fashions that were so 'un-English' . . . and he answered, with a half-smile, half-scoff, that it was only in England he was an outcast from society. In France, in Spain, in Italy, he was always welcomed among men and women of the highest social rank, and he supposed that he had unconsciously caught the foreign tricks of manner." There is a charming story of his going to dine in Paris with Prince Jerome Bonaparte. He did not then possess a dress suit and arrived in frock coat and black tie. His host presently slipped from the room, whilst other guests were being announced, and returned similarly dressed. Bradlaugh was quick to see the courtesy, but in a few days bought a dress suit, so as never again to put any future host to the same trouble.

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Such was the man himself in private life. As a public personage he had the reputation of being harsh, blasphemous, rough, an agitator all the more dangerous because of his legal acumen and

his great gift of oratory. But it must be remembered with what odds a professed republican and atheist had to fight in the 'fifties and 'sixties, when reverence for royalty, in the person of Queen Victoria, was a middle-class fetish, and Jowett, Temple, and Colenso were almost equally "suspect," because they ventured to question the literal interpretation and verbal inspiration of every passage in the Old Testament. Still there is no doubt that a good many people, who were no bigots, disliked his controversial methods. Even Huxley had "personally, politically, and philosophically" no liking for him, though he signed a memorial objecting to Miss Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant's exclusion from classes at University College.

Bradlaugh began provincial lecturing about 1857. In 1858 he was speaking in Sheffield and contending, against the Rev. Brewin Grant, that "the God of the Bible was revengeful, inconstant, unmerciful, and unjust, and that his attributes were proved to be contradicted by the book which professed to reveal them." He instanced the story of the Flood and the wars of the Israelites. Mr. Grant, on his side, urged that the Creation and Deluge stories were "consistent both with themselves and with science" (who would he find now to support him, even amongst the orthodox ?) and that "Iconoclast was a commentator deficient in learning, logic, and fairness." This was the sort of *argumentum ad hominem* which Bradlaugh had usually to meet.

In one of his first lectures at Northampton,

in 1859, he laid down his position as an atheist. "I do not deny that there is 'a God,' because to deny that which is unknown is as absurd as to affirm it. As an atheist I deny the God of the Bible, of the Koran, of the Vedas, but I cannot deny that of which I have no knowledge." From that creed he never swerved. It was not belief in God so much as the superstitious reverence for the Bible which he found prevailing that he was out to attack. "The Bible," he said in the first number of his paper, *The National Reformer*, is "that great cord with which the people are bound; cut this, and the mass will be more free to appreciate facts instead of faiths."

A few years later he gave a fuller statement of his creed, theological and political, in the same paper. "Editorially the *National Reformer*, as to religious questions, is, and always has been, as far as we are concerned, the advocate of atheism; it teaches that all the religions of the world are based upon error; that humanity is higher than theology; that knowledge is far preferable to faith; that action is more effective than prayer; and that the best worship men can offer is honest work, in order to make one another wiser and happier than heretofore. In politics we are Radicals of a very extreme kind; we are advocates of manhood suffrage; we desire shorter Parliaments; laws which will be more equal in their application to master and servant; protection from the present state of the laws, which make pheasants more valuable than peasants; we desire the repeal of the laws against blasphemy, and the enactment of

some measure which will make all persons competent as witnesses, whatever may be their opinions or religion ; we advocate the separation of Church and State, and join with the financial reformers in their efforts to reduce our enormous and extravagant national expenditure."

Disestablishment, manhood suffrage, abolition of religious disabilities ! To those who know anything of political feeling and political controversies half a century ago it will be obvious how the advocate of such doctrines would be met, and what an accretion of legend must have attached to his name. Even dispassionate critics like Matthew Arnold said that he appeared to be "for baptising us all in blood and fire into his new social dispensation" ; and was "evidently capable, if he had his head given him, of running us all into great dangers and confusion." In clerical circles he was mentioned almost with bated breath. The *Saturday Review* said, in 1867, that he had compared God to a monkey with three tails, and that the "ribaldry" which "from a sense of duty" they had "picked off Bradlaugh's dunghill" was "nauseating to the natural sense of shame possessed by a savage." There was a "watch story" which cropped up again and again. Bradlaugh was reported to have taken out his watch and said, "If there be a God in heaven, I give him five minutes to strike me dead." Time, place and circumstances varied ; but the myth persisted, in spite of being proved false again and again. Gross insults to his private character were not wanting. He was said to have been had up for

leaving his family chargeable to the Union! A clergyman accused him of living in "a sort of Voltaire villa" with his "squaw," "united by a bond unblessed by priest or parson." Bradlaugh promptly brought both libellers to book and compelled a retraction and apology from the latter, as outspoken as the offence was scurrilous. He also extorted a fine of £100, which, after deducting costs, was divided amongst various charitable institutions. The name of this clergyman—the Rev. Hugh McSorley—was by Bradlaugh's generosity, and at his own abject entreaty, not mentioned at the time. He repaid Bradlaugh by being anonymously offensive in the columns of *The Rock*.

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The most important incident in Bradlaugh's political work, prior to the general election of 1868 when he first stood for Northampton, was his share in the struggle for freedom of public meeting, which culminated in the breaking down of the Hyde Park railings in July, 1866. The Reform League, with which he had been early associated, had called a meeting in the park. Sir Richard Mayne, the head of the Metropolitan police, intimated that it would not be allowed and posted a notice to that effect on the park gates. Two days previously the League executive met. Bradlaugh moved that the meeting be persisted in. His resolution was carried. It was decided that the processions should march separately to the Marble Arch and demand admission. If refused, they were, after making their protest, to turn and proceed to Trafalgar Square. The leaders duly

approached the gates. They were hustled by the police. The crowds became irritated, and Bradlaugh's division, proceeding down Park Lane, either intentionally or accidentally, so pressed on the park railings that they gave way and the crowd poured through. Bradlaugh struggled to keep order. He was knocked down in the effort. There was a general *mêlée*, and finally the military were called out and marched through the park. But the right of public meeting had been asserted with such emphasis that it has since been rarely questioned.

Two years later Bradlaugh was offered an opportunity of standing up for the freedom of the press by the action of the Government in calling upon him to find sureties in the sum of £400 against the appearance of blasphemy or sedition in the columns of the *National Reformer*. They relied on an old statute of George III.'s time. Bradlaugh replied by bringing out the paper with the legend "Published in Defiance of Her Majesty's Government and of the 60 Geo. III., Cap. 9." For a few weeks the Government held its hand, and the paper continued to appear; but on May 24th, "Prosecuted by Her Majesty's Government" was printed across it. Complicated proceedings followed, Bradlaugh, with all a lawyer's keenness, taking advantage of every possible loophole in the Government's case. It appeared that he could be proceeded against because his paper was issued "at a less price than sixpence, to wit, at the price of twopence." So the rich might have blasphemy purveyed to them, though the poor might not!

Bradlaugh conducted his own case. When it came on, by some accident, only ten jurymen answered to their names, and the jury were discharged, the case remaining in abeyance. The Conservative Government went out and did not return to power. In the meantime much sympathy for Bradlaugh had been expressed by leading Liberals, such as J. S. Mill, Milner Gibson, Ayrton and others. Mill, indeed, asked for the repeal of the Act and, pending that, the suspension of all prosecutions under it, and he subscribed £10 to the fund for paying Bradlaugh's election expenses that year at Northampton.

Nevertheless, the case was revived early in 1869, before Baron Bramwell, and the Crown obtained a verdict. Bradlaugh, however, asked and obtained from the Exchequer Court a rule for a new trial. But it did not take place, for by that time the Government itself had actually brought in a Bill to repeal the enactments of 60 Geo. III., and the Law Officers of the Crown asked Bradlaugh to consent to a stay of proceedings. He agreed reluctantly, mainly because he was weary of twelve months' expensive and harassing litigation. "Fighting the Crown," he wrote, "is a luxury only to be indulged in by the rich as a voluntary occupation. I have fought from necessity, and have the sad consciousness that I retire victor at a loss I am ill able to bear." Mill wrote from Avignon, "You have gained a very honourable success in obtaining a repeal of the mischievous Act by your persevering resistance." But Bradlaugh was left with a debt of £50, over and above the costs met out of the

Defence Fund raised by the devotion of his followers.

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Two great battles he was still to fight, the first for freedom to publish serious scientific discussions of difficult social questions; the second, the assertion in Parliament of a man's right to affirm his loyalty in accordance with his own religious opinions. In the early 'seventies, though family troubles were pressing on him and financial difficulties were acute, he still found time to show his sympathy with continental struggles for freedom, just as at an earlier period he had espoused the Irish cause, though discountenancing Fenian violence. He visited France in 1871, and he tried in England to arouse sympathy for the young French Republic. He went to Spain in 1873 to assure Señor Castelar of English republican sympathy. He and Sir Charles Dilke were in those days the leaders of the republican movement in England, and Bradlaugh got himself widely denounced for his "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick," a lecture delivered in English towns.

He had said that he hoped the then Prince of Wales "would never dishonour this country by becoming its King," not because the Prince was himself other than "a worthy representative of an unworthy race," but because, if political education advanced as it ought, there would be no desire to see any member of the family "either sitting on the throne or lounging under its shadow." Bradlaugh was violently attacked in the press for

this "impudent and disloyal announcement," and Gladstone innocently caused a fresh outbreak of criticism by quoting, in a speech, a new version of the National Anthem—

"People throughout the land,
Join in one social band,
And save yourselves,"

which upon inquiry proved to come from *The Secularists' Manual of Songs and Ceremonies*, with a preface by Charles Bradlaugh!

America naturally welcomed a republican, and Bradlaugh tried to mend his fortunes by undertaking a lecturing tour there in 1873. He had a fine reception, but brought back little money, when the sudden dissolution of Parliament in 1874 recalled him to Northampton. He could not get back in time; but he had left his election address with his friends before sailing, and he was duly nominated though returned at the bottom of the poll. A vacancy was created the same autumn by the death of one of the sitting members. He stood again, with the same result, but he had improved his position. He went to America again directly afterwards. This time he did better, and reduced his debts by £1000.

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This year, 1874, was one of the most memorable of his life, not least because it first brought him into contact with the lady whose devoted friendship was to mean so much to him, and whose adherence was so greatly to hearten him in his crusade for freedom of publication. Mrs. Annie Besant, who has herself recorded her long friendship

with Bradlaugh and the debt she owed him, was a woman of great gifts. Her own father was a cultured sceptic, and her mother a disciple of Maurice's school of theology. To the enthusiastic girl, who says of herself with truth that she was "of the stuff from which fanatics are made," her mother's religion seemed lukewarm and Laodicean. She ardently embraced extreme Ritualism, fasted, flagellated herself and saw ecstasie visions. In 1866 she met the Rev. Frank Besant. In the same year she began, whilst following the way of the Cross through Passiontide and Easter, to make a comparative harmony of the Gospel accounts. Like the boy Bradlaugh of twenty years earlier, she came up against discrepancies, "and a doubt of the veracity of the story sprang up like a serpent hissing in my face. . . . To doubt was sin, and to have doubted on the very eve of the Passion was an added crime. . . . I forced myself to repeat Tertullian's *Credo quia impossibile* till, from a wooden recital, it became a triumphant affirmation . . . and I imposed on myself an extra fast as a penance for my ignorance and lack of firmness in the faith."

She was not yet nineteen. Within a few months she had married Frank Besant, knowing nothing of life, fresh from the "mystic fancies that had twined themselves round the figure of Christ" and the passionate fervour induced by Catholic books of devotion. Before marriage she idealised the priest in her husband; to be his wife was a vocation only second to that of the nun. With the shock of marriage came also the realisation

that she had to live with a man who "had very high ideas of a husband's authority and a wife's submission . . . precise, methodical, easily angered and with difficulty appeased." She had had not only a guarded, but a greatly indulged, girlhood. The shock was immense. "The easy-going, sunshiny, enthusiastic girl changed—and changed pretty rapidly—into a grave, proud reticent woman, burying deep in her own heart all her hopes, her fears, and her disillusiones. I must have been a very unsatisfactory wife from the beginning, though I think other treatment might gradually have turned me into a fair imitation of the proper conventional article." But she had had no training in domestic economy—"I had never had an allowance or even bought myself a pair of gloves"—and her idea of life was to get swiftly through any necessary work and to turn to her beloved books. She should never have married, at any rate whilst marriage was still regarded as the mid-Victorians regarded it. There were many such tragic misunderstandings; there will always be many, until the sentimental, sacramental view, which tells so strongly against the woman, gives place to the theory of a contract, or an equal partnership.

Still, no doubt, the Rev. Frank Besant had his grounds of complaint. His wife admits that she "must have been inexpressibly tiring to him." And soon religious differences came in to complete the tragedy. By that time two children had been born, and the mother was exhausted by a prolonged struggle of weeks for the life of the youngest,

who nearly died in the paroxysms of whooping-cough. She went through a physical crisis, followed by a prolonged mental one, in which she strove to find anchorage in Maurice's books, in Mansel, Robertson, Stopford Brooke, Matthew Arnold, Liddon and many other writers. But "my scepticism grew deeper and deeper as I read. The Broad Church arguments appeared to me to be of the nature of special pleading, skilful evasions of difficulties. . . . Given a good God, how can He have created mankind . . . to be tortured for ever? Given a just God, how can He punish people for being sinful, when they have inherited a sinful nature . . . of necessity? Given a righteous God, how can He allow sin to exist for ever?"

They are the old questionings to which answers are so hard to find. The young wife tried to stifle them by visiting amongst the labourers of her husband's Lincolnshire parish. There she found indescribable conditions—four generations sleeping in one room, grandmother and mother alike unmarried; a young married man obliged to tramp the district and taking to drink because as a "Union man" no one would employ him. It needed a Joseph Arch to teach the labourers to combine; but in those early days of combination membership of the Agricultural Labourers' Union was often ruin to the individual.

At length the crisis came. Belief in the divinity of Christ was gone. An appeal to Dr. Pusey for help brought only stern condemnation. "You are blaspheming. The very thought is

terrible sin. . . . It is not your duty to ascertain the truth ; it is your duty to accept and believe the truth as laid down by the Church. . . . You have no right to make terms with God. . . . You are full of intellectual pride." She returned home to Sibsey and refused henceforth to attend the Holy Communion, though not as yet withdrawing from other church services. Gossip arose ; she was told she must conform and attend communion ; she refused and was excluded from her home. For a time her little girl was allowed to go with her. " With a great price I had obtained my freedom — but I was free."

Her mother, to whom she went, soon died. Literary work proved a distraction. She began to write pamphlets under the direction of Mr. Thomas Scott, a friend of Colenso, Charles Voysey and other scholars and liberal thinkers. By 1874 she was facing the question of Atheism, and engaged on a tract " touching the nature and existence of God " ; and it was at this moment that she first met Charles Bradlaugh. She had gone to hear him speak at a public meeting. " I looked at him with interest, impressed and surprised. The grave, quiet, stern, strong face, the massive head, the keen eyes . . . was this the man I had heard described as a blatant agitator, an ignorant demagogue ? " Looking at his portrait by Mr. Walter Sickert one recognises the truth of her description, and all who ever heard him speak agree as to the profound impression he created.

They were mutually attracted from the first. His daughter says that the friendship between

them was "of so close a nature that, had both been free, it would undoubtedly have ended in marriage." As things were, it became a fruitful partnership in work, and his influence was a most valuable check upon mere enthusiasm. He warned Mrs. Besant against her "fatal facility" in speech. He told her never to think she had an opinion on a subject until she had studied the strongest things to be said against it, and added that "no steady work could be done in public unless the worker studied at home far more than he talked outside." Under his encouragement she became a Free Thought lecturer and began to contribute articles to the *National Reformer* over the signature of "Ajax." In 1877 Mr. Watts, their publisher, took over a stock of a pamphlet by an American physician, Dr. Knowlton, entitled *Fruits of Philosophy: an Essay on the Population Question*. The author, following Malthus, held that the number of the family should be restricted within the means of subsistence; but as early marriage tended to purity of social life, he advocated voluntary restriction. The pamphlet was never challenged until a disreputable Bristol bookseller sold some copies with the addition of improper pictures. He was prosecuted and convicted. Bradlaugh's publisher was, thereupon, also prosecuted for selling it and at once pleaded guilty.

Bradlaugh had no more than a general sympathy with the pamphlet. It was of no great merit. But he was a convinced Malthusian and a Quixote in defence of freedom of publication.

He at once took his publications into his own hands. He and Mrs. Besant formed themselves into a Free Thought Publishing Company, took a little shop, printed the Knowlton pamphlet and gave notice to the police that at a certain day and hour they would attend to sell it to the public. They were arrested, released on bail, and committed for trial to the Central Criminal Court. Bradlaugh moved for a writ of *certiorari* to remove the trial to the Court of Queen's Bench, and Lord Chief Justice Cockburn granted it on the ground that the object of the book was "the legitimate one of promoting knowledge on a matter of human interest." Indeed, when the trial came on, he declared that "a more ill-advised and more injudicious proceeding in the way of a prosecution was probably never brought into a court of justice," and described Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant as "two enthusiasts who have been actuated by a desire to do good in a particular department of society." Nevertheless, the jury's verdict ran: "We are unanimously of opinion that the book in question is calculated to deprave public morals, but at the same time we entirely exonerate the defendants from any corrupt motive in publishing it." This was a verdict of "Guilty" and involved a sentence. Would the defendants promise to cease selling the pamphlet? No, they would not. The judge thereupon sentenced them to six months' imprisonment, but as first-class misdemeanants, and to a fine of £200. Bradlaugh moved for a writ of error, and the Judge at once liberated them on Bradlaugh's own recognisance.

It was a moral triumph, and the verdict was subsequently quashed. Mrs. Besant wrote a pamphlet on *The Law of Population*, which was presently substituted for Knowlton's. But the consequences to her were serious, for her husband applied to the High Court of Chancery to deprive her of the custody of her little girl on the grounds of her "Atheism and Malthusianism," and she lost her case. Even access to her children was denied to her, and, though that right was recovered, she felt she must for their sakes forego it. It is only fair to record that, as soon as the children were old enough to decide for themselves, they came back to her. Another result of this prosecution was the establishment of the Malthusian League "to agitate for the abolition of all penalties on the public discussion of the population question."

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In 1880 came the general election and the great transfer of votes from Lord Beaconsfield to Mr. Gladstone. Bradlaugh was returned, with Henry Labouchere, for Northampton. The borough had previously returned Conservatives; it was a great turnover. But there were 2500 new electors, and almost to a man they were Radicals. Even though one of the local clergy had told his hearers on the previous Sunday that "to noble men who loved Christ more than party, Jesus would say 'well done,'" the Radicals of Northampton put Labouchere first and Bradlaugh second and the others nowhere. "Oh, they've swallowed Bradlaugh after all, have they?" was Labouchere's comment, the born *moqueur* and sceptic who,

as he explained in *Truth*, might be only a "moderate Liberal" in Northampton, but was a Radical anywhere else! "The religious member for Northampton," Lord Randolph Churchill once called him in contrast to Bradlaugh, though he was, as his biographer, Mr. Thorold, points out, essentially irreligious by temperament, whereas Bradlaugh "had the soul of a Covenantanter." The Conservative press was in a fury. "The bellowing blasphemer of Northampton" was only a mild specimen of the epithets bestowed upon Bradlaugh.

When Parliament met, Bradlaugh handed to the Clerk of the House this statement: "I, the undersigned, Charles Bradlaugh, beg respectfully to claim to be allowed to affirm as a person for the time being by law permitted to make a solemn affirmation or declaration, instead of taking an oath." When the Speaker invited him to make a statement to the House, he submitted that the Parliamentary Oaths Act of 1866 gave the right to affirm to every person for the time being permitted to make affirmation. "I am such a person. I have repeatedly for nine years past affirmed in the highest courts of jurisdiction in this realm. I am ready to make the declaration or affirmation of allegiance." Could any request have been made more reasonable, or have been submitted more respectfully? Yet the Speaker (Sir Henry Brand) "had doubts," and Lord Frederick Cavendish, seconded by Sir Stafford Northcote, moved that the point be referred to a Select Committee. The Committee was evenly divided, and Spencer

Walpole, the Chairman, gave his casting vote against giving permission. Bradlaugh then claimed his right to take the oath, regarding himself, as he afterwards explained, as under an obligation to his constituents to represent them, and "as bound, not by the letter of the words (of the oath) but by the spirit which the affirmation would have conveyed, had I been permitted to use it." Sir Henry Drummond Wolff at once rose and objected, and the Speaker allowed his objection. He attacked Bradlaugh violently on the grounds of his atheism (which "meant that an oath would not be binding on his conscience") and of his expressed Republican views. There was a violent debate lasting two days. At length Gladstone's proposal of another Select Committee was agreed to.

This Committee recommended that Bradlaugh should be allowed to affirm. A further debate followed. Labouchere moved that affirmation should be allowed and expressed the opinion that it was "repugnant to the feelings of all men of tolerant minds that any gentleman should be hindered from performing civil functions in this world on account of speculative opinions about another." Bright said that he pretended to no conscience and honour superior to the conscience of Mr. Bradlaugh. Gladstone spoke in favour of the motion; but it was lost by a majority of 45, including 31 Irish Home Rulers.

Two days later Bradlaugh presented himself at the table of the House and was called on to withdraw. Labouchere moved that he "be now heard at the Bar of the House." He there made

a fine and dignified defence, deprecating the introduction, by a member "wanting in chivalry," of an allusion to Mrs. Besant and appealing only to the law. "I have not yet used—I trust no passion may tempt me into using—any words that would seem to savour of even a desire to enter into conflict with this House . . . ; but I submit that one Chamber of Parliament—even its greater Chamber, as I have always held this to be—has no right to override the law. The law gives me the right to sign that roll, to take and subscribe that oath, and to take my seat there. . . . I am ready to admit, if you please, for the sake of argument, that every opinion I hold is wrong and deserves punishment. Let the law punish it. If you say the law cannot, then you admit that you have no right. . . . And as I shall have, if your decision be against me, to come to that table, when your decision is given, I beg you, before the step is taken in which we may both lose our dignity—mine is not much, but yours is that of the Commons of England—I beg you . . . as one man against six hundred, to give me that justice which on the other side of this hall the judges would give me, were I pleading there before them."

Nevertheless, the House voted against him. He refused to withdraw, but gravely accompanied the Sergeant-at-Arms to the Clock Tower of the House. "Let the people speak," said a special issue of the *National Reformer*, and the people spoke. Protest after protest followed. Four thousand people cheered him in Westminster Hall the day he was liberated. A week later the House

rescinded its decision, and he was allowed to affirm. The constitutional victory was for the moment won.

It was next the turn of the bigots and persecutors, who had undoubtedly a large following in the country, recruited amongst the many well-meaning people who objected less to Bradlaugh's opinions than to his outspoken way of expressing them. He offended their sense of respectability. "The honest stupid part of the church-going public," wrote Leslie Stephen, "feels that it has been insulted, and is simply anxious to revenge itself upon the insulter." Numerous petitions for his exclusion from Parliament were sent in, some signed by Sunday-school children! Manning presented one from Roman Catholics, which Newman, to his honour, had refused to sign. The case was raised in the Courts, one Clarke bringing an action against Bradlaugh for penalties for having sat and voted without taking the oath. In one form or another the suit lasted nearly three years, and was ultimately decided in Bradlaugh's favour; but an earlier decision against him created a vacancy and compelled a re-election at Northampton. Bradlaugh was triumphantly re-elected, but was not allowed to take the oath, or his seat. He returned to the House and on August 3rd, 1881, attempted to administer the oath to himself. A violent struggle followed, and, being a man of enormous physical strength, he was only ejected after a *mêlée*, in which he fainted and his clothes were almost torn off him. Nothing but Mrs. Besant's intervention kept back the angry crowd

outside, who had heard rumours of what was passing within.

He brought an action for assault against the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms and lost it. There were many other actions and counter-actions. For the duration of that Parliament Bradlaugh was never again allowed to sit. The Courts were continually occupied with the case. A mass of prejudice was kept in being. Mrs. Besant and his daughters were boycotted by educational and learned associations. But the end was certain. When in 1885 Bradlaugh was re-elected, the new Speaker (Mr. Peel) refused to allow any intervention. He took the oath and his seat. Two years later he brought in, and passed through the House, a Bill to permit members of the House to affirm. As he lay dying, in 1891, the House, whose respect he had conquered, expunged from its records the original Resolution it had passed to exclude him.

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The victory was won ; but the great struggle of six years left him much weakened in health, and the enormous expense of repeated elections and law-suits crippled him for the rest of his life. His debts obliged him to work hard, even during recess. He had, as he said, no means except " those I earn from day to day by tongue and pen. My great trouble now is, lest I should be unable to earn enough to meet my many heavy obligations, in which case I should be most reluctantly obliged to relinquish my Parliamentary career." That, fortunately, never became necessary. He made himself felt in the House. His inclusion in the

Ministry was even considered. It never came about, because the Gladstone Government went out, and before it returned to power Bradlaugh was dead. In 1889 he had a severe illness. After it he took a journey to India. He had long taken an active Parliamentary interest in Indian affairs. He returned apparently much better, but a chill, caught in the severe winter of 1890-91, brought on a heart attack, which proved fatal, and he died on January 30th.

A few days later Gladstone, speaking in the House on the Religious Disabilities Bill, used these words :—

“A distinguished man and an admirable member of this House was laid yesterday in mother earth. He was the subject of a long controversy in this House, the beginning of which we recollect, and the ending of which we recollect. We remember with what zeal it was prosecuted; we remember how summarily it was dropped. . . . Does anybody who hears me believe that the controversy so prosecuted and so abandoned was beneficial to the Christian religion?”

So spoke a great Christian apologist. Others, like Labouchere, said of Bradlaugh that “his life was an example to Christians, for he abounded in every Christian virtue. This the House of Commons came at last to recognise. I do not think that there is a single member more popular or more respected than he was on both sides.”

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It was a great triumph for character. As a thinker Bradlaugh can hardly be said to have

contributed much to the world's stock of ideas. He was no philosopher ; he was merely a fearless sceptic. But he was a great fighter. He may not have advanced men's thought, but he vindicated their right to think, and no freethinker of them all in the nineteenth century knocked off so many fetters from the shackled human spirit. For two reasons he deserves to be especially remembered, his determination to bring rationalism right home to the people's intelligence, and his strong faith in human progress, based upon no sentimental view of human perfectibility.

He was too much of a reformer, as his friend Mr. J. M. Robertson said of him, to be content to keep to himself, or to a select circle of his friends, the truths which he thought he had arrived at by hard study and thinking. He must go out and proclaim them in the market-place. "He was a democrat in religion as in politics. If truth was good for him, it was also good for the multitude." By close study of the Bible, in the original Greek and Hebrew as well as in the English version, he had convinced himself of its inherent contradictions and the barbarous nature of much of its morality. He argued that it could not, therefore, be inspired and was no more entitled than any other ancient literature to serve as an ethical guide to mankind. "As it is by Act of Parliament declared to be a criminal offence in this country," he wrote, "for any person to deny this book to be God's Holy Word, it is not only a right, but it becomes an unavoidable duty, on the part of a Freethinking critic, to present as plainly as possible to the notice

of the people every weakness of the text, however trivial, that may serve to show that the Bible, or any portion of it, is fallible, that it is imperfect, that so far from being above all books, it is often below them as a mere literary production." This, through more than thirty years of public lecturing, he consistently did. No doubt he was wanting in the literary sense. He would scarcely have understood Matthew Arnold's view, still less that of Maurice. But he was second to none in fearlessness.

This quality was equally characteristic of his politics. He would have nothing to say to Socialism. He was no optimist. He did not believe that men would easily become perfect, either as individuals or in the mass. But he did believe that, if they were made free and left to work out their own salvation, they would, by helping themselves, help the progress of humanity. Mrs. Besant's defection to the ranks of the Socialists, and later to the Theosophists, was a grief to him; but he never interfered with any one's freedom of choice in the realm of opinion. He loved England, but he loved justice more; hence his championship of the Irish and of the races of India. He was a Home Ruler before Mr. Gladstone, and a believer in the right of self-determination for nations forty years before President Wilson formulated his Fourteen Points. And he was fundamentally honest. "I cannot help feeling," said W. H. Smith—who abhorred his opinions—"that there is not an honest man in Parliament." And, above all, he was a man

of action. "Men turned instinctively to him," says Mr. Robertson, "as to a born leader," to one who had never betrayed the truth as he had seen it.

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| MORLEY, JOHN | Life of W. E. Gladstone. |
| DAVIDSON, J. MORRISON | Eminent Radicals. |

REPORT of proceedings of the Court of King's Bench, being the mock trials of Carlile for alleged blasphemous libels, 1822.

THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY

(1825-1895)

"OPEN atheism," said Leslie Stephen, writing of Bradlaugh in 1880, "is not common in decent English society. But a radically sceptical frame of mind in regard to theology is so common that the opposite state of mind is fast becoming the exception." In so far as this is true, no one had contributed more to bring it about than the protagonists in the great conflict between science and religion of the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it would not be untrue to say, with Mr. A. W. Benn, though in a slightly altered connexion, that for some twenty years after Darwin published *The Origin of Species* "the controversy passed from the hands of the scholars to the hands of men of science to such an extent that for a long time to come the cause of rationalism became identified in popular opinion with the methods and results of physical research." In other words, men were less interested in theological controversy, or the philosophical scepticisms of such as Mansel, than in questions of the nature of protoplasm, of animal automatism, of the relation of body and mind, of the affinities of man with the animal world—in short in the gospel of science which its enemies called the gospel of materialism.



[To face p. 138.]

THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY.
(At the age of 68.)
From a photo by Mayall.

Amongst the group of scientific men, who made this mid-Victorian period so famous, no name stands out more prominently than that of Thomas Henry Huxley—by temperament a fighter, by instinct an anti-clerical, who has recorded of himself that he willingly subordinated personal ambition “to untiring opposition to that ecclesiastical spirit, that clericalism, which in England, as everywhere else, and to whatever denomination it may belong, is the deadly enemy of science.”

Darwin himself was no controversialist. He would have been content to pursue his researches, careless of recognition except by the few. But in Huxley he found a disciple, ready and willing to be his “bull-dog,” and to devote his life “to the popularisation of science and to the endless battles and skirmishes over evolution.” Huxley had had a hard struggle to make good his footing in the scientific world. It was difficult, indeed, in the days of the Philistines to gain any recognition for science, or, indeed, any opening at all which would enable a young scientific man even to earn his bread. In 1851 he wrote despondently to his future wife :

“Of one thing my opportunities for seeing the scientific world in England force upon me every day a stronger and stronger conviction. It is that there is no chance of living by science. . . . There are not more than four or five offices in London which a zoologist or comparative anatomist can hold and live by.”

And even these commanded salaries less than that of many a bank clerk ! All the greater honour,

both to him and to the girl who was to be his life-long support, that she was willing to wait, and he to work at his manifest destiny, rather than adopt a lower and more lucrative calling so as to hasten their marriage.

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It was in 1847 that Huxley first met Miss Henrietta Heathorn, of Sydney, and he was then an assistant surgeon in H.M. Navy, attached to the *Rattlesnake*, a 28-gun frigate engaged on an exploring expedition to New Guinea. He was the seventh child of George Huxley, senior assistant-master of Dr. Nicholas's school at Ealing—a school which numbered Newman among its pupils—and there was not much available money to spend on his education. Little, indeed, was spent. He had a couple of years in the school and, after his father's retirement to Coventry, was given the run of his library and devoured every book he could find, especially on metaphysics. Through the marriage of his sister to a Dr. Cooke he got a chance to learn something of anatomy and began, whilst quite a boy, a sort of medical training, to console himself by studying human machines for not being allowed to become an engineer. His first *post-mortem* (at the age of fourteen) nearly proved fatal to him. He was poisoned in some way, and, though his life was saved by nursing and care in a farm-house and by country air, he was always afterwards subject to attacks of hypochondriacal dyspepsia.

He taught himself German, then an unusual acquirement, experimented with electricity,

indulged in theological speculations and finally, at the age of sixteen, went as assistant to a doctor at Rotherhithe, with a view to walking the London hospitals and obtaining a medical degree. He was soon transferred to his second brother-in-law, Dr. Scott, the husband of his favourite sister, Lizzie. At the age of seventeen he was given a free scholarship at Charing Cross Hospital and, fortunately for him, came under a good and precise teacher, Mr. Wharton Jones, the lecturer on physiology, who gave him the mental discipline he had hitherto lacked. At nineteen he made his first anatomical discovery, that of a membrane, till then unperceived, in the root of the human hair, henceforth to be known as Huxley's membrane. In 1843 he won the first chemical prize and in 1845 went up for his M.B. degree (London), winning the gold medal for anatomy and physiology.

He was still only twenty, too young to qualify at the College of Surgeons. He was advised to write to Sir William Burnett, Director-General of the Navy Medical Service, who allowed him to enter for that examination and afterwards sent him to Haslar. There he remained only a few months, being fortunate enough to attract the notice of its chief officer, Sir John Richardson, who obtained for him the appointment to the *Rattlesnake*, which filled up the next four years.

They were years of hard work and considerable hardship, as well as of adventure.

“Life on board Her Majesty's ships in those days was a very different affair from what it is now (thirty

years later), and ours was exceptionally rough, as we were often many months without receiving letters or seeing any civilised people but ourselves. In exchange, we had the interest of being about the last voyagers, I suppose, to whom it could be possible to meet with people who knew nothing of fire-arms. . . . But, apart from experience of this kind, and the opportunities offered for scientific work, to me, personally, the cruise was extremely valuable. It was good for me to live under sharp discipline, to be down on the realities of existence by living on bare necessities; to find how extremely well worth living life seemed to be when one woke up from a night's rest on a soft plank, with the sky for canopy, and cocoa and weevilly biscuit the sole prospect for breakfast; and more especially to learn to work for the sake of what I got for myself out of it, even if it all went to the bottom and I along with it."

He met with little sympathy in his scientific pursuits. The individual officers of the navy cared as little as the British Admiralty for the "Anatomy and Affinities of the Family of the Medusæ," a branch of zoology to which Huxley gave considerable attention, and in which he made notable discoveries. Indeed, Professor Allman said, after his death, that his discovery of the two membranes constituting the body of the Medusæ and of their relation to the vertebrate embryo "stands at the very basis of a philosophic zoology and of a true conception of the affinities of animals."

It was on the *Rattlesnake's* first visit to Sydney that Huxley met Miss Heathorn and fell in love with her almost at first sight. They had many

tastes in common. She was highly educated, knew German well, and, as her son says, had a quiet simplicity and strength of character which were to be the best corrective to Huxley's impulsive temperament. They were quickly engaged and agreed to be married when he should become full surgeon. But it was seven years before he could make a home for her, and they had the added trial of a long separation, for he was obliged to return to England in 1850, and they did not meet again until just before their marriage.

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When the *Rattlesnake* arrived home Huxley tried hard to get the Admiralty to undertake the publication of his scientific papers, but without result. He could not afford to publish them himself. There were endless negotiations both with the Government and the Royal Society, which received him with great kindness and gave him the coveted F.R.S. on the strength of his *Medusa* discovery. Indeed, he came very near receiving the Society's gold medal, which was actually bestowed on him the following year. So, at twenty-six, he could write—

“I have at last tasted what it is to mingle with my fellows—to take my place in that society for which nature has fitted me.”

And in a letter to his sister, now settled with her husband in Tennessee, he says—

“I don't know and I don't care whether I shall ever be what is called a great man. I will leave my mark somewhere, and it shall be clear and distinct

[T. H. H., his mark] and free from the abominable blur of cant, humbug, and self-seeking which surrounds everything in this present world."

But for all his brave words, the uncertainty of his position and the absence of anything like a settled income were a grievous handicap. He was often sadly depressed and doubted whether he were doing right in subordinating his fiancée's claim to the claims of science. No professorship or appointment seemed to come his way. In August, 1852, he wrote to her that he sometimes felt he must abandon that hope—

"In truth I am often very weary . . . and I begin to doubt whether I have done wisely in giving vent to the cherished tendency towards Science which has haunted me ever since my childhood. Had I given myself to Mammon I might have been a respectable member of society with large watch-seals by this time. I think it is very likely. . . . I may give up the farce altogether—burn my books, bury my rod, and take to practice in Australia."

But he knew it would be, in a sense, desertion. The following year he was again in the depths. Fortunately a letter full of trust and encouragement reached him from Miss Heathorn, and her steadfast faith in his destiny nerved him to renew the struggle.

In 1854 he began at last to see light. He was writing a good deal and lecturing at the Royal Institution and elsewhere. In June came an appointment as Lecturer to the Government School of Mines in Jermyn Street. In August he

was entrusted with the Coast branch of the Geological Survey, and the same month was appointed to a lectureship at St. Thomas's Hospital on Comparative Anatomy. The following year Miss Heathorn came with her family to England, and, to Huxley's great happiness, they were married, though she had been very ill and her health for some years was a matter of great anxiety.

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"I hope your marriage will not make you idle," wrote Darwin; "happiness, I fear, is not good for work." But he need not have been afraid. Idleness and Huxley were incompatible terms. Even the honeymoon was spent on the Coast Survey. The Jermyn Street Museum had to be re-organised. He was lecturing to working men as well as to ordinary students, both there and, later, at Maurice's Working Men's College. "People's Lectures," he called these—

"Popular Lectures I hold to be an abomination unto the Lord. I want the working classes to understand that Science and her ways are great facts for them—that physical virtue is the base of all other, and that they are to be clean and temperate and all the rest—not because fellows in black with white ties tell them so, but because these are plain and patent laws of nature, which they must obey under penalties. . . . I am sick of the dilettante middle-class, and mean to try what I can do with these hard-headed fellows who live among facts."

Still he was also trying what he could do for the

dilettante middle-class by contributing a scientific column to the *Saturday Review*. And he was gradually winning general recognition. As he writes jestingly to his sister in 1858, after enumerating his various appointments—

“T. H. H. considered a rising man and not a bad fellow by his friends—*per contra* greatly over-estimated and a bitter savage critic by his enemies. . . . I have a high standard of excellence, and am no respecter of persons.”

Nevertheless, all through his life he was sensitive and nervous as a public speaker. He might believe in plainness of speech and practise it, but it was at a considerable cost to his nervous energy and equanimity. Lecturing he was obliged to undertake, not only, as he himself says, “for filthy lucre,” but as the best means of getting some education in science to the mass of the people. He would, however, gladly have been spared platform controversy, but for the necessity of defending Darwin in the great fight with the Church, which began in 1859.

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In November of that year *The Origin of Species* was published. Huxley had reserved his judgment, holding doubt to be a duty and being as yet unconvinced that any cause existed adequate to produce transmutation. Lyell and Hooker were already adherents. “If I can convert Huxley I shall be content,” wrote Darwin. At their first meeting some years earlier Huxley says that he remembers—

"expressing my belief in the sharpness of the lines of demarcation between natural groups and in the absence of transitional forms with all the confidence of youth and imperfect knowledge. I was not aware at the time that (Darwin) had then been many years brooding over the species question; and the humorous smile which accompanied his gentle answer, that such was not altogether his view, long haunted and puzzled me."

But by 1857 Huxley was feeling that some working hypothesis must be found respecting the origin of known organic forms to replace the untenable separate creation theory. Darwin and Wallace's hypothesis came—

"like a flash of light to a man who was lost himself on a dark road. . . . My reflection, when I first made myself master of the central idea of the *Origin*, was, 'How extremely stupid not to have thought of that!'" Henceforth "the only rational course for those who had no other object but the attainment of truth was to accept Darwinism as a working hypothesis and see what could be made of it. Either it would prove its capacity to elucidate the facts of organic life, or it would break down under the strain."

But although Huxley had been preparing the way for Darwin before the book actually appeared, and had, on his own account, been re-examining the structural likenesses between apes and man, the full force of Darwin's argument, especially on the geological side, came home to him with fresh force when the book was actually in his hands. "As for your doctrine, I am prepared

to go to the stake, if requisite, in support of (Chapter IX. ('The Imperfections of the Geological Record'))." By good luck, and owing to the book being sent to a *Times* reviewer who knew no science and sought Huxley's help, he was able to get a vigorous notice, written by himself, into the *Times* about Christmas time. He then felt that his best course was to devote himself to the branch of zoology peculiarly his own—Development and Vertebrate Anatomy. By following up Darwin's hints in his own teaching, especially in some lectures to working men on the Relation of Man to the Lower Animals, he threw down, without expressly intending it, the gage of battle to the religious world.

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It was promptly taken up. The British Association met at Oxford in 1860. One or two papers were down for reading which touched the fringe of the subject. Huxley tried to avoid controversy, but when Professor Richard Owen stated that the brain of the gorilla "presented more differences as compared with the brain of man than it did when compared with the brains of the very lowest and most problematical of the Quadrumana," he felt obliged to intervene with a direct negative. It was the subject with which he had recently been occupied. He was a skilled embryologist, Owen was not; and he had satisfied himself by careful and repeated examination that in the earliest embryonic stages there is no discernible difference between the embryos of the dog, the ape, and the human being, whilst—

“so far as cerebral structure goes, it is clear that Man differs less from the Chimpanzee, or the Orang, than these do even from the Monkeys, and that the difference between the brains of the Chimpanzee and of Man is almost insignificant, when compared with that between the Chimpanzee brain and that of a Lemur.”

He could not, therefore, avoid the conclusion that though “the structural differences between Man and the Man-like apes certainly justify our regarding him as constituting a family apart from them, . . . there can be no justification for placing him in a distinct order.” He is, and must be, a member of the order Primates, which also includes the Apes and the Lemurs.

If then natural selection has produced the variations in species amongst the animals, there is no ground for denying its power to produce the species Man. And here, naturally, broke in the chorus of abuse from the defenders of religion. On the last day of the Oxford meeting, the country clergy, the ladies of Oxford, and the large majority of the members of the British Association crowded into the biggest room of the Museum to applaud Bishop Samuel Wilberforce’s championship of the orthodox view. He had been carefully posted with the necessary arguments; but he knew nothing of science first-hand, and his ignorance was patent to an expert. He adopted a light and scoffing tone. “There was nothing in the idea of evolution. Rock-pigeons were now what rock-pigeons had always been” (apparently ever since the original pair entered Noah’s ark!). Finally he turned to Huxley, seated on the platform, and

begged to know whether he claimed descent from a monkey on his grandfather's side, or his grandmother's? "The Lord hath delivered him into mine hands," ejaculated Huxley to Sir Benjamin Brodie, who sat next him, and, when he rose to speak, he said with quiet but arresting sternness that, though he was not ashamed to have a monkey for his ancestor, he would be ashamed to be connected with a man who used great gifts to obscure the truth. The effect was electrical. He had been coldly received when he rose; but when he sat down, the cheers almost equalled those which had greeted the Bishop. And men thought twice before daring to meet the new theories with no better weapon than ridicule.

Of course the battle was not yet won, not even after Sir William Flower's demonstration at the next meeting of the British Association at Cambridge. Jokes about the missing link and "being on the side of the angels" are well within the memory of men and women not yet old. But all, except those who definitely determined to close their minds to science in the interests of orthodoxy, knew that some means must be found to harmonise *Genesis* with Darwin, or that *Genesis* must go. Religious papers in 1862, such as *The Witness*, might talk about this—

"anti-scriptural and most debasing theory . . . standing in blasphemous contradiction to biblical narrative and doctrine . . . the vilest and beastliest paradox ever invented in ancient or modern times amongst Pagans or Christians."

But it was no longer possible to silence men of

science as the Church of Rome tried to silence Galileo.

"*Magna est veritas et prævalebit!*" wrote Huxley in 1894, when he republished his 1862 lectures under the title *Man's Place in Nature*, partly to encourage younger men, by showing them how the contested theories of one age are the commonplaces of the next.

"Truth is great, certainly, but, considering her greatness, it is curious what a long time she is apt to take about prevailing. . . . I could say (in 1863) with a good conscience that my conclusions 'had not been formed hastily or enunciated crudely.' I thought I had earned the right to publish them. . . . So the book came out. . . . The Boreas of criticism blew his hardest blasts of misrepresentation and ridicule for some years, and I was even as one of the wicked. Indeed, it surprises me at times to think how any one who had sunk so low could since have emerged into at any rate relative respectability. . . ." Yet let every young student remember that "*Veritas prævalebit* some day; and even if she does not prevail in his time, he himself will be all the better and wiser for having tried to help her. And let him recollect that such great reward is full payment for all his labours and pains."

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It was pretty nearly all the reward Huxley met with himself, except the friendship of the few who think. He was anathema to a large part of society. Old ladies wrote him anonymous letters, praying that the Almighty would send him down quick into the pit. But besides scientific men and philosophers, like Spencer, there were a few sincere

religious men who recognised his fearless honesty. Amongst these was Charles Kingsley. They had their mutual love of natural history as common ground, and the genuine friendship between them is shown by the letter in which Huxley acknowledges Kingsley's sympathy in one of the greatest sorrows of his life. In September, 1860, soon after the memorable speech at Oxford, the little eldest son, who had been his joy and pride, died at four years old after two days' illness.

Kingsley had hinted at the Christian hope. Huxley replies—

“Had I lived a couple of centuries earlier, I could have fancied a devil scoffing at me . . . and asking me what profit it was to have stripped myself of the hopes and consolations of the mass of mankind? To which my only reply was and is: Oh devil! truth is better than much profit. . . . If wife and child and name and fame were all to be lost to me one after the other as the penalty, still I will not lie. . . . I neither deny nor affirm the immortality of man. I see no reason for believing it, but, on the other hand, I have no means of disproving it. . . . I know what I mean when I say I believe in the law of the inverse squares, and I will not rest my life and hopes upon weaker convictions. I dare not if I would. Measured by this standard, what becomes of the doctrine of immortality? . . . Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing.” . . .

"I know right well that 99 out of 100 of my fellows would call me atheist, infidel, and all the other usual hard names. As our law stands,* if the lowest thief steals my coat, my evidence (my opinions being known) would not be received against him. But I cannot help it. . . . If ever the occasion arises when I am bound to speak, I will not shame my boy. . . . I don't profess to understand the logic of yourself, Maurice, and the rest of your school, but I have always said I would swear by your truthfulness and sincerity, and that good must come of your efforts. The more plain this was to me, however, the more obvious the necessity to let you see where the men of science are driving. . . ."

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There were other indications of their direction, not all of Huxley's giving, though few of his scientific colleagues spoke out so plainly until well into the 'seventies. He himself had no very special occasion to come up against the orthodox with any new and offending theory until his Edinburgh lecture in 1869, *On the Physical Basis of Life*. In this he contended that—

"whether in animals or plants the structural unit of the living body is made up of similar material, and that vital action and even thought are ultimately based upon molecular changes in this life-stuff."

This "protoplasm," he declares, he was thought by some to have invented for the special purpose of annoying the orthodox. But five years later his view was taken up and reinforced by Prof. W. K. Clifford, who developed it into a sceptical

* The law was altered in 1868.

discussion of the possible existence of consciousness apart from a nervous system. By that time Tyndall, too, had delivered at Belfast the presidential address to the British Association, in which he vindicated the necessary derivation of life from the spontaneous combination of its inorganic elements and ruled out the necessity of imagining any other cause. "We claim," he said, "and we shall wrest from theology, the entire domain of cosmological theory."

Neither Tyndall nor Huxley were prepared to admit the charge of being materialists, often as it was brought against them. They made no such claim to definite knowledge as the use of that term implies. But they asserted that science knows only states of consciousness and co-ordinated molecular movements. These may, or may not, be phenomena related to some hidden reality; on that point science has no knowledge. Huxley, indeed, half in jest, finding that all other members of the Metaphysical Society, of which he was a member, were *ists* of some kind—

"took thought and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of *agnostic* . . . and took the earliest opportunity of parading it at our Society to show that I, too, had a tail like the other foxes."

The title came to stay. Spencer gave it its due philosophical basis, and Leslie Stephen fixed its place in literature by his beautiful essay, *An Agnostic's Apology*.

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The next fourteen years of Huxley's life may

be called the period of full recognition. Up to 1870 he was "a coming man"; by 1870 he had arrived. After his serious breakdown in health in 1884 he was, as far as active scientific work was concerned, laid on the shelf, though no retirement could ever quench his ardent spirit, and he filled his last ten years of life with as many active interests as would suffice most men for the years of their prime. But from 1870 to 1884 public bodies of all kinds, learned societies and Cabinet Ministers were each in turn claiming his services as the foremost living exponent of biological science.

First came the London School Board. He had always been zealous in the cause of education. He wished to see science properly taught and given its right place in any educational scheme. He wanted more time given to drawing, and he was an ardent advocate of "nature study," both as a means of quickening the mental faculties and as preparing the mind for appreciating the newer views of man and his relation to the universe. At the same time he was no bigoted opponent of Bible study. Theology, he said, is not religion. To advocate no religious teaching because you are afraid of theological dogma is like "burning your ship to get rid of the cockroaches."

"Teach a child what is wise, that is *morality*. Teach him what is wise and beautiful, that is *religion*!"

Many were surprised by his tolerance. But he always maintained that the people want moral teaching, and they want literature.

" Though for the last quarter of a century," he wrote in 1879. " I have done all that lay in my power to oppose and destroy the idolatrous accretions of Judaism and Christianity. I have never had the slightest sympathy with those who, as the Germans say, would ' throw the child away along with the bath. . . . ' The mass of the people should not be deprived of the one great literature which is open to them—not shut out from the perception of their relations with the whole past history of civilised mankind."

But if there were no historical continuity to be preserved, if the educator were dealing with a fresh and untouched population, or the denizens of another planet, then Huxley would never have advocated the use of the Bible as an agency for conveying religious and ethical ideas. Its ethics were too suspect and its religion too intermixed with superstition. This is probably what Matthew Arnold meant when he quoted Huxley as an opponent of the Bible in the schools.

However, it was not only on the School Board that Huxley showed a tolerance of the clerical point of view, in spite of his avowed anti-clericalism. A notable instance occurred when George Eliot died at the end of 1880, and a suggestion was made by Spencer and others that Dean Stanley should be memorialised to allow burial in the Abbey. Huxley's refusal to join, expressed in a letter to Spencer, shows an understanding of the clerical point of view rare enough in an opponent.

" However much I may lament the circumstance, Westminster Abbey is a Christian Church and not a

Pantheon, and the Dean thereof is officially a Christian priest, and we ask him to bestow exceptional Christian honours by this burial in the Abbey. George Eliot is known not only as a great writer, but as a person whose life and opinions were in notorious antagonism to Christian practice in regard to marriage, and Christian theory in regard to dogma. How am I to tell the Dean that I think he ought to read over the body of a person, who did not repent of what the Church considers mortal sin, a service, not one solitary proposition in which she would have accepted for truth while she was alive ? ”

A year and a half later, when Stanley died, Huxley recalled the occurrence, and declared, as a proof “of the extraordinary catholicity and undaunted courage of the man” with whom he had always been on terms of warm friendship, that Stanley would have agreed to the Abbey funeral, “had it been pressed upon him by a strong representation.”

But besides the School Board, on which he did not serve long, there was his work for the Science and Art Department at South Kensington ; his position on several Royal Commissions—he served on eight in all ; the Lord Rectorship of Aberdeen University in 1874 ; the Secretaryship of the Royal Society from 1871–80, and its Presidency from 1883–85, with the Trusteeship of the British Museum which this involved ; his appointment as Inspector of Fisheries ; his Professorship of Biology in the Normal School—later the Royal College of Science—and a host of minor activities. Recognition was coming, too, though tardily, from the older universities. Cambridge gave him an

honorary degree in 1879. Two years later Oxford suggested giving him the Linacre Professorship of Physiology, and he was sounded as to standing for the Mastership of University College (Oxford). Both these propositions he declined. He had no wish to leave London and to exchange his happy freedom in St. John's Wood for academic restrictions. "I do not think I am cut out for a Don or your mother for a Donness," he writes to his son.

Some of his friends regretted that he allowed himself to be withdrawn from pure science by so much official work; but he had a strong sense of public duty and a keenness for work which amounted almost to a disease. He could not be idle. Even a holiday at St. Andrew's was spent in ransacking the volumes of Suarez and confuting St. George Mivart by references to the works of the learned Jesuit theologian. "What a wonderful man you are to grapple with those old metaphysico-divinity books," wrote Darwin. . . . "I must tell you what Hooker said to me a few years ago. 'When I read Huxley, I feel quite infantine in intellect.'"

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But nature had her revenge. There had been previous warnings. In 1872 he was a prey to acute dyspepsia and, helped by the generosity of scientific friends, went on a trip to the Mediterranean and Egypt. He returned only partially cured and had to go abroad again the following year. Extreme temperance and reasonable care kept him going for some years—that and his indefatigable spirit. "Bottled life," R. H. Hutton called it.

“ If Professor Huxley were to become the President of the Social Science Association, or of the International Statistical Congress, he would still be amusing, so much bottled life does he infuse into the driest topic on which human beings ever contrived to prose.”

No wonder he was in such general request to speak and lecture here, there and everywhere, and to preside over this and that society. But he strained the bow too far, and in 1884, just when he was considering the propriety of retiring before long from active life, the string snapped, and he was imperatively ordered abroad at once to avert a hopeless breakdown.

Personal sorrows and losses had helped to bring this about. In 1882 Darwin died. The same year Francis Balfour was killed on the Alps, and Huxley lost “ the only man who can carry out my work.” A few years earlier W. K. Clifford’s brilliant career had come to its early close. After Balfour’s death Huxley was for a few days “ utterly prostrated . . . scarcely able to eat or sleep.” And now, in 1884, the beginning of mortal illness in his second daughter, the wife of the artist, Mr. John Collier, came as a bitter grief to him, and the effort of hiding his feelings so as not to throw gloom over the wedding of a younger daughter was an added strain. He spent the winter abroad, returning in April, 1885 ; but there was not enough improvement to justify taking up his work again, and in May, just after his sixtieth birthday, he resigned his posts under Government as well as the Presidency of the Royal Society. Oddly enough, he had often jokingly said that men of science should

be strangled at sixty for fear they became obstructive to new ideas.

He wandered about for a time to English sea-side places and the Yorkshire moors in search of health. His retiring pension made daily work no longer necessary. And, thanks to Lord Iddesleigh, a Civil List pension of £300 made up the drop from salary to pension. But he might have begun to feel inaction wearisome, had not the appearance of an attack on Reville by Mr. Gladstone in the *Nineteenth Century* appealed to his sense of humour and roused his combative spirit.

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Mr. Gladstone, whose enthusiasm both for Homer and for the Hebrew scriptures sometimes overstepped his scholarship, was notoriously unfortunate in controversy. One wonders that he dared, in Huxley's lifetime, maintain that the order of creation in *Genesis* is supported by the evidence of science. But so it was, and, even after Huxley had replied, Gladstone, greatly daring, returned to the charge with a *Proem to Genesis* and delivered himself again into Huxley's hands. Well might Huxley say that—

“the ignorance of the so-called educated classes in this country is stupendous, and in the hands of people like Gladstone it is a political force. . . . Seriously, it is a grave thing that the destinies of this country should at present be seriously influenced by a man who, whatever he may be in the affairs of which I am no judge, is nothing but a copious shuffler in those which I do understand.”

Huxley followed up this purely controversial matter by a longer essay on the *Evolution of Theology*, in which he aimed at showing in geological language that the Hebrew Scriptures are—

“stratified deposits (often confused and, even with their natural order, inverted) left by the stream of the intellectual and moral life of Israel during many centuries. And, embedded in these strata, there are numerous remains of forms of thought which once lived. . . . Our task is to rescue these . . . and by careful comparison with existing forms of theology to make the dead world which they record live again.”

In other words, he is suggesting the study, which has since made such strides, of Comparative Religion, that new science, the child of the historic method, to which Reville's *Prolegomena to the History of Religions* was a noteworthy contribution. “Philosophies of religion” Huxley viewed with deep distrust—“in my experience they turn out to be only ‘religions of philosophers,’ quite another business”—but history, recorded facts, and comparison of facts, was part of the field of science.

There were other passages at arms with Mr. Gladstone, with Magee, the Bishop of Peterborough, and with Dr. Wace, the Dean of Canterbury. They were often amusing enough, though one is tempted to regret that Huxley gave so much time and thought to the Gadarene swine. Those unfortunate animals were discussed for two years, and both defence and attack strayed into all sorts of by-paths of geography, history, demonology and the like. Perhaps Huxley felt some twinges

himself, for in an essay written in 1891 he inserts a sort of *apologia*—

“ Thus, when such a story as that about the Gadarene swine is placed before us, the importance of the decision, whether it is to be accepted or rejected, cannot be overestimated. If the demonological part of it is to be accepted, the authority of Jesus is unmistakably pledged to the demonological system current in Judæa in the first century. The belief in devils who possess men, and can be transferred from men to pigs, becomes as much a part of Christian dogma as any article of the Creeds. If it is to be rejected, there are two alternative conclusions. Supposing the Gospels to be historically accurate, it follows that Jesus shared in the errors, respecting the nature of the spiritual world, prevalent in the age in which he lived and among the people of his nation. If, on the other hand, the Gospel tradition gives us only a popular version of the sayings and doings of Jesus, falsely coloured and distorted by the superstitious imaginings of the minds through which it had passed, what guarantee have we that a similar unconscious falsification, in accordance with preconceived ideas, may not have taken place in respect of other reported sayings and doings ? ”

* * * *

The dilemma is real enough and constitutes the serious side of Huxley's general attack upon the credibility of the New Testament miracles. Mixed up with this was his “ fun,” his love of controversy as a fine art, and his dangerous faculty for penetrating further than his antagonist, even into what that antagonist regarded as his own preserves. Thus he upsets Gladstone concerning Josephus as

thoroughly as he had confuted St. George Mivart out of Suarez, and when Hebrew scholars question his interpretation of Levitical names, he promptly refers them to the view of a well-known Hebrew commentator.

It is the fashion now to meet the difficulties, which Huxley raises, by recognising the "human element" in the Gospel records. But such a weapon could not fairly be wielded by a man like Dean Wace, who upheld the verbal inspiration of the Bible in its most absolute form. Indeed, the general recognition of fallibility in the Scriptures owes more than it always likes to admit to Mrs. Humphry Ward, who, in Huxley's vivid description of her, "swept away the greater part of Wace's sophistries as a dexterous and strong-wristed housemaid sweeps away cobwebs with her broom, and saved a lot of time." Nowadays quite orthodox critics realise that the value of testimony must itself be tested. In 1889, if testimony seemed to confute the Scriptures, so much the worse for the testimony. A Robert Elsmere of those days had no choice but to leave the church of his fathers; now he would most likely be made a Dean.

For all his enjoyment of controversy—"I sent off another article to Knowles last night, a regular facer for the clericals. You can't think how I enjoy writing now for the first time in my life"—he was scrupulously exact and fair in his statements, and never personal or wilfully offensive. It gave him immense pleasure to cite, in defence of agnosticism, Cardinal Newman's admission that

the evidence for ancient miracles is no better than for modern ones. But if, says Huxley, the exudation of blood from the relics of the holy martyrs, Marcellinus and Petrus, is as well established from contemporary records as the resurrection of Jesus, "Cardinal Newman's doctrine of 'Development' is true to an extent of which the Cardinal did not dream."

Articles about the Gadarene swine and Marcellinus and Petrus were in themselves little more than the recreations of a philosopher. The permanent value of Huxley's contribution to the literature of free thought consisted rather in his outspoken defence of truth and his following wherever that led him. He may or may not have demonstrated that "Christ was not a Christian"—in other words, that the religion which Jesus founded died out with the disappearance of the Ebionites and Nazarenes—those despised Judæo-Christian sects who faded away before the advance of the Alexandrian form of Christianity, based upon Pauline teaching and formulated in the Church's Creeds.

"Thinking of the claims made by orthodox Christianity on the one hand, and the total absence of foundation for them on the other, I find it hard to abstain from using a phrase which shocked me very much when Strauss first applied it to the Resurrection, *Welt-historischer Humbug!*"

* * * * *

Huxley hated humbug of every kind, world-historic or individual. Truth in word and in

thought was a passion with him which amounted to a religion. And with lying he classified what he called the "sin of faith," i.e. stultifying the reason by assenting to propositions, neither self-evident nor adequately proved. He would admit no compromise. Children should, no doubt, be taught "the mythology of their time and country"; but, as they grew up, their questions should be answered frankly, and they should be encouraged to probe all things. Freedom of thought and speech, not ribaldry, was the one thing worth fighting for. And right gallantly he fought. "His strongest claim to reverence and gratitude," wrote Lord Hobhouse after his death, was "the steadfast courage and consummate ability with which he fought the battle of intellectual freedom, and insisted that people should be allowed to speak their honest convictions without being oppressed or slandered by the orthodox."

He could turn this honesty even against himself. His own readiness to admit error he proved over and over again in the realm of science, and he makes humorous confession of his weak, but very natural, shrinking when the sincerity of his belief in the legitimacy of marriage with a deceased wife's sister was put to the test in his own immediate circle.

Shufflers he could not endure. Magee he liked and, after their meeting at the Academy dinner in 1889, they buried the hatchet and respected one another. And when he encountered Dr. Wace by accident in Mrs. Humphry Ward's drawing-room, only the twinkle in his eye betrayed

any discomfiture. But going for Gladstone he never could resist, if it was only because of his verbiage and the involvements of his style. Huxley himself wrote a style of crystal clearness, the fitting expression of his clearness of thought. And he was stern with himself about any exuberance—"it is an excellent rule always to erase anything that strikes one as particularly smart when writing it."

In the scientific world his inflexibility of purpose had its reward even in this life. Thirty years after his encounter with Wilberforce he sat once more in the Theatre at Oxford, hearing Lord Salisbury tell the British Association that evolution was now disputed by no reasonable man. "It was very queer to sit there and hear the doctrines you and I were damned for advocating . . . enunciated as matters of course," he wrote to Hooker.

By this time even the Churchmen were vying with one another to adapt their tenets to Darwinism. It had invaded every branch of philosophy. Ethics and sociology spoke its language, not always with full recognition of its implications. Hence, when in 1893 Huxley delivered the second of the Romanes lectures at Oxford (Gladstone had delivered the first), he chose for his subject *Evolution and Ethics*, and set himself to answer the question—

"to what extent modern progress in natural knowledge, and more especially the general outcome of that progress in the doctrine of evolution, is competent to help us in the great work of helping one another?"

His answer to this question is not only intensely interesting in itself, but also typical of the stern and somewhat stoical attitude to life of mid-Victorian freethinkers. He will have none of the shallow optimism of praters about human progress, and apologises for the loose use of the term, "survival of the fittest," too common even amongst men of science. "Fittest" does not mean "best" in any ethical sense. If the moral sentiments have been "evolved," so too have the immoral. Physiologically speaking, "fittest" means best adapted to environment. If the world cooled down again to the glacial period, lichens and snow mosses might be the "fittest" of plants to survive. So far from the ethical progress of society reproducing the cosmic process, it is the exact opposite of it. The progress of society consists not in—

"imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it. . . . The theory of evolution encourages no millennial anticipations. If for millions of years our globe has taken the upward road, yet some time the summit will be reached and the downward route will be commenced. The most daring imagination will hardly venture upon the suggestion that the power and the intelligence of men can ever arrest the procession of the great year."

On this note the Oxford lecture ended. In the *Prolegomena*, published with it in the last year of Huxley's life, he formulated his creed—

"That man as a 'political animal' is susceptible of a vast amount of improvement, by education, by instruction, and by the application of his intelligence to

the adaptation of the conditions of life to his higher needs, I entertain not the slightest doubt. But so long as he remains liable to error, intellectual or moral; so long as he is compelled to be perpetually on guard against the cosmic forces, whose ends are not his ends, without and within himself; so long as he is haunted by inexpugnable memories and hopeless aspirations; so long as the recognition of his intellectual limitations forces him to acknowledge his incapacity to penetrate the mystery of existence; the prospect of obtaining untroubled happiness or of a state which can, even remotely, deserve the title of perfection, appears to me to be as misleading an illusion as ever was dangled before the eyes of poor humanity. And there have been many of them. That which lies before the human race is a constant struggle to maintain and improve, in opposition to the State of Nature, the State of Art of an organised polity; in which, and by which, man may develop a worthy civilisation, capable of maintaining and constantly improving itself until the evolution of our globe shall have entered so far upon its downward course that the cosmic process resumes its sway; and, once more, the State of Nature prevails over the surface of our planet."

* * * * *

So solemn and so despondent a creed—"our Progress from Self-interest to Self-annihilation," as Hartley had called the ethical process—which made George Eliot so serious, and young Clifford at times so despairing, left Huxley in his seventieth year without illusions, indeed, but also without sadness and without fear.

"We have seen the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven, to light up a soulless earth," wrote Clifford in

one of his last essays ; “ we have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion is dead. Our children, it may be hoped, will know that sorrow only by the reflex light of a wondering compassion.”

Huxley's was a robust faith. He needed no compassion.

“ I have a great respect for the Nazarenism of Jesus—very little for later Christianity. But the only religion that appeals to me is prophetic Judaism. Add to it something from the best Stoics, and something from Spinoza, and something from Goethe, and there is a religion for men.”

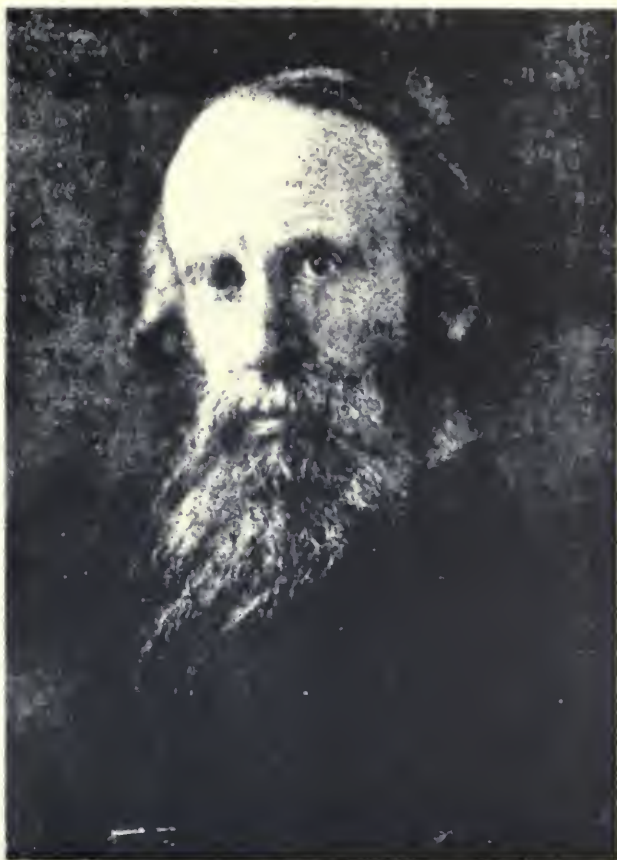
On the practical side his religion was a strong desire to help. The people round him he saw to be still perishing for want of knowledge. “ If I am to be remembered at all, I should like to be remembered as one who did his best to help the people.” And so he spent himself over thirty years in trying to bring home to the people all that evolution meant for natural science and for the practical activities which must be based upon science. And when old age checked his activity, he lived in quiet cheerfulness at Eastbourne amongst his grandchildren and his flowers. The 1894 meeting of the British Association at Oxford was his last public appearance ; his speech, in seconding the vote of thanks to Lord Salisbury, was his last public utterance. “ It was a pleasant last flare-up in the socket ! ” he writes to Hooker. Before the British Association met again the candle had indeed gone out.

“ I am not afraid of the priests in the long

run," he had written that same year to Lewis Campbell. "Scientific method is the white ant which will slowly but surely destroy their fortifications." The great anti-clerical had triumphed. He had in his own person vanquished that "ecclesiastical spirit" which even in youth he had recognised as "the deadly enemy of science." He could look forward with hope to the future of humanity. "The importance of scientific method in modern practical life—always growing and increasing—is the guarantee for the gradual emancipation of the ignorant upper and lower classes, the former of whom especially are the strength of the priests." There was no fear that the sacerdotal Christianity, which Clifford, who had been brought up in it, so much dreaded, would ever again succeed in fastening its fetters upon the freed spirit of Man.

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To face p. 170

LESLIE STEPHEN.

(At the age of 70.)

From a photo by G. C. Beresford.

LESLIE STEPHEN
(1832-1904)

OTHER exponents of the philosophic rationalism, which is nineteenth-century England's main contribution to the history of thought, might have been here chosen instead of Leslie Stephen. John Stuart Mill, representing the elder Victorians, and Herbert Spencer the younger, were, each in his way, more distinctively progressive thinkers. But just because Stephen was primarily a writer and only secondarily a philosopher, because he had had the ordinary upbringing and shared the common experience of average human doubters, he perhaps touches every-day humanity more closely and has the best claim to be regarded as one of its liberators.

For thirty years of his life Eton, London, and Cambridge had been training him and preparing him for Holy Orders. It was not until 1862 that he began to realise, as so many of the best of his contemporaries were also realising, that belief in the creeds was gone, and that henceforth the "Rev." Leslie Stephen must divest himself of his prefix and of his sacerdotal character. The change came so naturally and with so little apparent pain or struggle that it cannot but seem to the generation, which shared it, typical of their own experience. Only it found expression in the

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pages of a writer remarkable for clearness and fairness of statement, well suited to be the spokesman of an epoch which had more or less found health and salvation in scientific rationalism after "the sick fatigue and languid doubt" of Arnold's contemporaries.

Matthew Arnold, indeed, "had little sympathy with those who went out"—so Mrs. Humphry Ward assures us. She thinks he was essentially "a Modernist long before the time," one who "would have liked to see the Church slowly reformed and modernised from within." Leslie Stephen, in his essay on Arnold, says that "he apparently thought that a modified form of Catholicism would be the religion of the future." Stephen, on the other hand, when he realised that he had "never really believed" his creed, simply dropped it and turned himself to the task of "living and dying like a gentleman, if possible." He remains, therefore, the type—and how perfect a type!—of the "men who went out," and of what their after life in the world could teach the men and women of their time.

* * * * *

He came of no ordinary stock. His family have thrown up many men and women distinguished amongst their fellows. Both his father and his brother stood high in the law and the public services, and his mother was a Venn, one of the saintly Evangelicals of the Clapham Sect. Sir James Stephen, the father, had for years been legal adviser, Under Secretary and finally Permanent Secretary to the Colonial Office. In a sense,

he *was* the Colonial Office, for, whilst Ministers came and went, "Mr. Over-Secretary Stephen"—as the malicious, or perhaps the envious, called him—continued to draft despatches, Orders in Council and even Parliamentary Bills, almost unassisted. Indeed, he was not very ready to be assisted. Sir Henry Taylor says "he rather preferred not to be helped," and he was capable of dictating straight off with marvellous rapidity the longest and most complicated documents. Thirty folio pages of MS. before breakfast was not an uncommon morning's work, and it is on record that he once dictated an Act of sixty-six sections, which filled twenty-six printed octavo pages in the statute book, between Saturday and Monday!

Such unremitting labour was only made possible by a life of extreme asceticism and strict economy of time. He seems to have needed no recreation except a change of work. When weary of Colonial affairs he turned to ecclesiastical biography and put on record his unusual knowledge of the Clapham Sect and other religious bodies. For many years, as his son says, "he never ate a dinner, contenting himself with a biscuit and a glass of sherry as lunch and an egg at tea." And though he never suggested to his children that those who went to balls or theatres were wicked, he showed that in his eyes such pleasures were, for serious people, "not convenient." He was, indeed, "a living categorical imperative." "Did you ever know your father do a thing because it was pleasant?" the mother once asked Leslie's elder

brother, Fitzjames. "Yes, once—when he married you," the little boy replied, with a gallantry unusual at his years.

But it was an isolated exception. Not that the children were debarred from all pleasures. They grew up in an atmosphere of books, and play was not neglected. The father, who found his own recreation in the study of Voltaire and, on the rare occasions when he went to literary breakfasts, could be as loquacious as any talker present, could also be an excellent playfellow both to his children and his grandchildren. And the mother spent many hours teaching her children and reading with them. From her Leslie learned a love of poetry, which excited him up to the verge of an illness. Fortunately for him, it was early recognised by his parents that he was abnormally sensitive and excitable. It would have been very easy indeed to develop too quickly the emotional side of his nature. But Sir James Stephen's "fine taste and his sensitive nature made him tremblingly alive to one risk. He shrank from giving us any inducement to lay bare our own religious emotions. To him and to our mother the needless revelation of the deeper feelings seemed to be a kind of spiritual indelicacy. To encourage children to use the conventional phrases could only stimulate to unreality or actual hypocrisy."

The boy was, therefore, not brought up in any spiritual forcing house. But how deep and sincere was his father's religion is apparent from Sir James's private journals: "Well, I have never yet

passed a day without praying for the spiritual weal of my children, since I had any to pray for, and, if we err on the side of not pressing them to religious demonstrations, developments, or early sensibility, may God forgive us, and compensate the loss to them ! My daily and nightly terror is that they should be 'patent Christians'—formalists, praters, cheats, without meaning or even knowing it."

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Leslie was not unduly precocious. He was six years old before he could read to himself, and then his reading was suitably childish—he had "got through twenty-two pages of Jack the Giant-killer." But a very little application fatigued him. Only poetry delighted him, and he "could hardly keep from crying" when a matter-of-fact physician prescribed hum-drum lessons, no poetry and plenty of fresh air. Sir James in alarm broke up his London home and conveyed his family to Brighton, where the elder boy, Fitzjames, was already at school. Leslie attended the same school as a day boy until he was nine, when his parents moved to Windsor so as to enter both boys as day-scholars at Eton.

Neither was very happy there. Day boys were looked down on and came in for a good deal of bullying, much resented by the sturdy Fitzjames, who did what he could to protect his little brother. But Leslie needed home care and profited by the cultivated companionship of his parents, and he remained too delicate for the rough-and-tumble of full school life. About the

time that Fitzjames left and went to King's College in London as a preparation for Cambridge, the eldest brother, Herbert, died at Dresden, and Sir James's own health began to give way. He decided to resign his post; he left Windsor, and he took Leslie away from Eton. The boy was still only fourteen. For the next two years his education was desultory. He went to a tutor's at Wimbledon and learned a good deal of German. He travelled about with his parents, to Paris, to Devonshire and elsewhere. At length, in 1848, he, too, was entered as a student at King's College, and there came under the tuition and influence of Maurice.

Two years later he went to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, an undergraduate still under eighteen, who knew something of several languages, had done a good deal of miscellaneous reading, and had laid a sufficient foundation of mathematics to take him, with industry, to the middle of the first class of the Mathematical Tripos. He came out twentieth wrangler in 1854, to his father's great gratification. "The contents have it *nem. con.*," wrote Sir James. "You are content, and we are much more than content. We are grateful to God and to you—to God for His great mercy for giving you the strength and will to do so much, and to you for the effort you have made."

Leslie's Cambridge life had also worked a great improvement in his health. He had become a famous walker, just as a few years later he was to become a noted Alpine climber. And he was an enthusiastic, even a "fanatical," oarsman, who for ten years knew no greater gratification than

the success of his college boat. He spent over ten years at Cambridge, for, though he was not the best man of his year at the Hall and could not, therefore, be certain of a fellowship, it so happened that a "bye-fellowship" (a sort of supernumerary fellowship, involving assistance in chapel and the taking of Orders) fell vacant. Leslie Stephen was ordained by the Archbishop of York and became "presbyter fellow" and junior tutor of "the College or Hall of the Holy Undivided Trinity of Norwich," otherwise Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

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From all accounts he exercised a considerable and most beneficial influence upon the undergraduates. His "muscular Christianity"—to use the phrase which his biographer attributes to T. C. Sandars of the *Saturday Review*—was very genuine and free from the forced heartiness which makes the society of so many clergymen and schoolmasters so trying. He read well in Chapel, he preached but seldom, and he practised what he himself later declared to be the true creed of a muscular Christian—"to fear God and walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours." And when he came face to face with doubt, he fought his battle silently, scrupulously guarding himself from any tampering with the faith of those committed to his charge, but making at once the necessary sacrifice for conscience' sake.

It was a considerable sacrifice. He loved Cambridge. He had no thought of marrying. A celibate life amongst young men and books

was his ideal. He expected to lose his fellowship as well as the tutorship, if he gave up his clerical duties. But he was reading Mill, Comte and the philosophers generally, and those who knew him best were convinced that his "thorough honesty" must ultimately lead him to agnosticism. He put the matter very simply himself. "I became convinced, among other things, that Noah's flood was a fiction (or, rather, convinced that I had never believed in it), and that it was wrong for me to read the story as if it were a sacred truth. So I had to give up my position at Trinity Hall. Upon my stating in the summer of 1862 that I could no longer take part in the chapel services, I resigned my tutorship at the request of the Master. The College, however, allowed me to retain my fellowship and hold some minor offices." This concession he owed a good deal to the influence of his friend, Henry Fawcett.

He stayed on in Cambridge for two and a half years more; but the zest was gone out of the university life, and he recognised later that his continued residence was a mistake. Perhaps his break with Christianity had left a little more bitterness than he thought. There are hints of it in some of his letters. Talking of dissenting chapels, he writes to Lowell in 1869, "I listen with composure even to their bells, and have somewhat got the better of the bitterness I used to feel towards all denominations of Christians, before I had quite shaken off my white tie." And again, to Wendell Holmes, he admits that he is "generally too savage, or rather have too little sympathy

with the orthodox of all kinds. You are in a happier position ; but, to make excuses for me, you must remember that I am rather bitter : first, as having wasted a large part of my life in the damnable fetters of the Thirty-nine Articles, and can never quite forgive my slave-drivers ; secondly, that in this country we are still compassed around with the most noxious and bump-tious orthodox people."

Amongst these were, no doubt, the majority of Cambridge dons, at any rate as far as the American Civil War was concerned. Leslie Stephen, whose forbears had been prominent in the fight for emancipation in Wilberforce's time, was a vehement supporter of the North when most Englishmen, trembling at the very name of democracy, supported the South. He went over to the States, met and fell in love with Lowell, as later with Charles Eliot Norton, and all through his life retained strong American sympathies. Indeed, he did not a little to further the cause of Anglo-American understanding, and it is not the least of his public services.

Later in life he was inclined to minimise the severity of his religious struggle. In 1865, when he finally left Cambridge, he wrote in his journal : "I make the following note of my creed. Will it change ? My faith in anything like religion has been gradually growing dimmer. I can scarcely believe that two and a half years ago I was still reading prayers as a parson, and that little more than a year ago I was preaching (apparently in other than Cambridge pulpits). I now believe in

nothing, to put it shortly ; but I do not the less believe in morality. I mean to live and die like a gentleman, if possible." But a friend, who watched the struggle, speaks of "the misery endured, when doubt as to the truth of revealed religion, according to the orthodox view, gradually increased. . . . The pain he suffered was very acute . . . and was made doubly so because he knew what grief his determination would cause to some of his family." Sometimes he would excuse vehemence in after life by telling his friends that they never knew what it was "to be throttled by a white choker."

Many men must have known it, both then and since, as long as taking Orders was the only road to high academic or scholastic preferment. It was because Leslie Stephen had the courage to show that the price was too high to pay that he stands high among the liberators. And in the sunset of old age he had his reward. His memories then were only of peace. "Many admirable people have spoken of the agony caused by the abandonment of their old creed. Truth has forced them to admit that the very pillars upon which their whole superstructure of faith rested are unsound. The shock has caused them exquisite pain, and even if they have gained a fresh basis for a theory of life, they still look back fondly at their previous state of untroubled belief. I have no such story to tell. In truth, I did not feel that the solid ground was giving way beneath my feet, but rather that I was being relieved of a cumbrous burden. . . . I was not

discovering that my creed was false, but that I had never really believed it."

* * * *

The law and journalism were the alternatives natural to a Stephen. There was some doubt as to whether even an unfrocked parson could divest himself of his legal disabilities. Could he, for instance, stand for Parliament, or be called to the Bar? The question was not solved in Leslie Stephen's case for, though he began to eat his dinners, he was soon so absorbed in literary work that no other career was necessary. His brother, Fitzjames, was already a *Saturday Reviewer*, and was able to introduce Leslie to John Douglas Cook. George Smith was just starting the *Pall Mall Gazette* with Greenwood as editor, and Fitzjames was already known to Mr. Smith through his contributions to *Fraser* and *Cornhill*. There was another opening for Leslie, who later on was to edit *Cornhill* and to plan for Mr. Smith the *Dictionary of National Biography*. And, through his American friends, he got in touch with the *New York Nation* and became a regular contributor.

He soon had plenty to do and began to cherish finer literary ambitions. Journalism was a useful crutch, but "the practice of everlastingly making bricks without straw is not altogether healthy for the soul of man; and I begin to fancy that I had better put a little in before I take so much out." So he writes to Lowell in 1870. By that time he was married to Thackeray's younger daughter, Minny, and had the happiest of homes in London

and of home circles, for her charming elder sister lived with them in the house which Thackeray had left to his daughters, and his mother, Lady Stephen, was settled near with her son, Fitzjames. "I don't know whether I have given you the impression that I am exceedingly happy; but I ought to have. My wife is everything you may please to fancy her, and my sister-in-law is a model of all conceivable sisters-in-law. We have heaps of friends—in fact, so many that the difficulty is to keep hold of them in this intricate wilderness of a city. Of course, my father-in-law, whom I never saw, had an innumerable acquaintance, and a large number of them remain to his daughters. Now, London with plenty of friends, and a family that one loves, is to my mind the pleasantest place in the universe. My mother and sister, and my brother have migrated across the park, and we all live within a few minutes' walk of each other, and with sundry cousins we form a little colony in the neighbourhood of the South Kensington Museum."

It is a charming picture, and when one remembers that a few years back Cambridge had seemed to him an equally ideal residence, one realises his capacity for happiness and for promoting it in others, and why, to Lowell and to many, he was the "most lovable of men." The birth of a little daughter, Laura Makepeace—"in reference to her grandfather's name and his pet heroine"—came to complete his domestic joy, and it was at about this period that he put together and published the Alpine studies, which he called *The Playground*

of *Europe* (1871). But the more serious study was beginning, and by 1873 he can say, "I am in good health and spirits, and working steadily—but uncommonly slowly—at the great book" (*The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, published 1876).

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The same year saw the almost unnoticed appearance of his first serious contribution to free thought, the *Essays on Freethinking and Plain Speaking*, dedicated to Norton and published in both England and America. In a letter to Norton, Stephen confesses that he was a little disappointed at the absence of reviews. Most editors thought it safest to ignore the book; even the tolerant *Examiner* told its reviewer to be "reticent" and made him sign his review. Certainly it strikes at once the note so characteristic of Stephen, clearness of thought and plainness of speech; but it would scarcely startle a present-day reader. In the 'seventies, however, people were not yet prepared to see the Broad Churchmen so unsparingly exposed to the cold blast of sceptical criticism. Still less were they prepared for attacks on the gospel narratives.

At the outset Stephen raises the question which Arnold had also raised, how best to effect the transition from the old world of unquestioning faith to the new world of scientific questioning. And his answer to it is very different from Arnold's. "We are passing through a great change, of which no living man can expect to witness the end, or even the beginning of the end. How is it to be

brought about with the least shock to morality and lofty sentiment; and how are the ideas already familiar to educated people to be propagated through less cultivated classes with the least possible injury to the vital parts of their faith? . . . Am I to say, for example, openly, that the history of the promulgation of the Jewish Law is nothing but a popular legend, when ignorant persons will suppose that I mean to strike at the very foundation of morals? Is not silence in such a case better than a rash proclamation of a bare truth? . . . I imagine that one conclusion is plain enough in theory, though not always carried out in practice. Whatever reticence may be desirable, we ought not to tell lies, or to countenance the telling of lies."

Stephen is very clear that whoever believes that he cannot "at the same time officiate as a clergyman and speak the truth" is bound to officiate no longer. He is equally clear, with Bradlaugh, that "one of the superstitions against which we have specially to contend in England is the excessive idolatry of the Bible." Are the Broad Churchmen, who accept so many of the conclusions of the Higher Criticism, right in continuing to read in church passages of doubtful authenticity and still more dubious morality "with a solemnity calculated to impress their sacred character upon the minds of their congregations"?

His answer, put shortly, is that this cannot be right. He recognises that though "the Broad Church party are in the main honest and able

men," their vain efforts to reconcile the irreconcilable "involve a waste of honesty and ability." Maurice's writings seemed to him "a melancholy instance of the way in which a fine intellect may run to waste in the fruitless endeavour to force new truth into the old mould. A new chaos, and not a new order, is the result of such manipulation of the raw materials of faith." But Maurice was a mystic and a metaphysician. Stephen was a disbeliever in the value of ontology—he regarded it as the ghost of theology—and there is no trace of mysticism in any of his writings, except perhaps a hint in *The Alps in Winter*, where he speaks of "pure undefined emotion, indifferent to any logical embodiment, undisturbed by external perception."

But for the most part he was by no means indifferent to logical embodiment. To him the first duty of a thinker was "saying what he thinks in the plainest possible language." He would scarcely tolerate even the use of a foreign word. No $\tau\acute{o}\ \tau\acute{\iota}\ \eta\nu\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$ or *Ding an sich* for him. What was clearly apprehended could be expressed in its simple English equivalent. No wonder that Maurice seemed to him "muddle-headed, intricate, and futile," though this he said in a private letter only. In the *Essays* he merely indulges in a half-tender, half-humorous reminiscence of the days when he sat among those who could not come "within the range of (Maurice's) personal influence without being profoundly attracted by the beauty of his character. The lads who, with the advantage of hearing his teaching

before the authorities of King's College discovered that he did not believe that hell was as hot and as durable as could be wished, generally went through a curious intellectual stage in after life. Some, indeed, have never emerged from it." Others, like Leslie Stephen, retained "only the moral lesson that candour and toleration were excellent things, whilst refusing to admit that they implied acceptance of two contradictory theories at the same time."

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Even in this first volume of *Essays*, and still more clearly in the later *An Agnostic's Apology*, Stephen attacked the problem, which Arnold had shirked, of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Much had been said from Colenso's time onwards against the credibility and authenticity of the Old Testament stories. People were beginning to be accustomed to hear these questioned with equanimity. But the New Testament was a different matter. Even Arnold had not ventured beyond a suggestion that the more miraculous events, such as the Resurrection, were not unmixed with legend, and, as *Aberglaube*, need not be regarded as "of faith." Stephen did not stop there. He will have nothing to say to such glozing over of difficulties. "It is the product of intellectual indolence, though not of actual intellectual revolt. We have not the courage to say that the Christian doctrines are false, but we are lazy enough to treat them as irrelevant. . . . To proclaim unsectarian Christianity is, in circuitous language, to proclaim that Christianity is dead. . . . No! the essence

of the belief is the divinity of Christ. . . . To be a Christian in any real sense you must start from a dogma of the most tremendous kind, and an undogmatic creed is as senseless as a statue without shape or a picture without colour. Unsectarian means unchristian."

To his own question, "Are we Christians?" he replies in effect that most men of intellect are not. Many still call themselves by the name, some for lower reasons, some "for the higher reason, that they fear to part with the grain along with the chaff; but such men have ceased substantially, though only a few have ceased avowedly, to be Christian in any intelligible sense of the name. How long the shadow ought to survive the substance is a question which may be commended to serious consideration."

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The *Essays* end, therefore, with a negative conclusion. By 1878 he was prepared to speak more definitely. In the interval his life had been broken by a great sorrow. On his forty-third birthday (28th Nov., 1875) his wife died suddenly in Switzerland, where she had gone for her health, and where she was happily looking forward to the birth of a second child. To a man so affectionate and so dependent upon affection the blow was terrible, coming as it did not long after the death of his mother, to whom he had always been so tenderly attached. That loss he could take with resignation. Lady Stephen had died in the fulness of years. "I only feel that something is taken out of my life," he wrote to Norton, "which

can never come back to it, and that I am one stage nearer the end. . . . I hope that it may help to make me a better man in some sense," though not (as a pious uncle had hoped) to make him a Christian.

But his wife's death was different—"some things won't bear talking about"—and what he had to say he could only say by inference in his writings. His convictions were unflinching. "Is there a more cutting piece of satire in the language than the reference in our funeral service to the 'sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection'?" Even in the Christian churches themselves, are there not strange puzzles? Do they not claim essential continuity with the Jewish creed, a creed which pointedly omits all reference to a future state? Is not the *Book of Job* "a splendid declamation in favour of Agnosticism"? And *Ecclesiastes* "a treatise of 'melancholy scepticism'"? Yet these are read in the churches. Compare again the Psalm, "Lord, thou hast been our refuge," with the passage from Paul's *Epistle to the Corinthians*, appointed to be read in the Burial Service. "Which is the most congenial sentiment at a moment when our hearts are most open to impressions? Standing by an open grave, and moved by all the most solemn sentiments of our nature, we all, I think—I can only speak for myself—with certainty must feel that the Psalmist takes his sorrow like a man . . . while the Apostle is desperately trying to shirk the inevitable. . . . I would rather face the inevitable with open eyes."

This was Stephen's attitude always. He would face the inevitable. As an agnostic he must assert that there are limits to human intelligence, and that metempirical knowledge, which includes theology, lies beyond those limits and is therefore, for him, no knowledge. Of Christ he says, "I hold that Christ was a man. I regard the character of Christ as within the range of human possibilities. . . . Why should I be forced to postulate an incarnation of deity to account for goodness, even in a superlative degree? . . . The belief in God is simply the opposite pole of disbelief in man." Of the Bible he says, "The Bible has been made an idol and therefore made grotesque. . . . The grotesque in art and religion is merely a proof that the infantile imagination has no grasp of realities. Floods drowning the world, rivers turned to blood, and the sun standing still to light a massacre, are toys of an arbitrary fancy, which can join incongruities without a sense of absurdity."

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So much for his negative conclusions. What had he to give on the positive side? In a long analysis of Newman's theology, especially the super-subtle *Grammar of Assent*, he grants Newman's thesis—which was also Arnold's—that the test of a creed is its vitality. "It proves its right by exercising its power. That is true which will work." But when Newman listened with awe to the voice in his soul, *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*, was it necessary, was it even reasonable, to limit *orbis terrarum* to the lands which had embraced Catholicism? And when Arnold said of the secret

of Jesus that "it worked," was it incumbent on him to believe that the secret was of divine origin, was more than the moral teaching of a man of the finest moral perceptions? Faith is certainly an assumption, and assumptions—hypotheses—are a necessity of intellectual progress. "The whole history of human belief is a history of the growth and decay of such assumptions. . . . To assume a doctrine may be the best or only way of testing its truth. . . . But whilst this is perfectly true of belief, it is not true of right belief." That depends on the verification of assumptions. We must not believe more than the evidence warrants, no matter how comforting, how fortifying, how fertile in good such beliefs may seem to be! "The *depositum* of faith which we must accept is not that which is guarded by any single Church, however august in its history and imposing in its pretensions. It is that body of scientific truth which is the slow growth of human experience through countless ages and which develops by the labour of truth-loving men and under the remorseless pressure of hard facts. . . . Those opinions have the most authority which are most rational; and the safest test of rationality is that they have commended themselves to independent inquirers, who themselves acknowledged no law but reason."

How does Christianity stand the test? In Stephen's opinion, very imperfectly. "In its origin it proposed a remedy no longer appropriate to modern wants; and greatly as it has been developed it has not been developed in the required direction. The old doctrine, for example,

makes poverty sacred and inevitable, instead of regarding it as an evil to be extirpated ; it places all our hopes in a world differing from this in all its conditions, and to be reached only through a supernatural catastrophe, instead of hoping everything from gradual development." Christianity must be discarded, therefore, as both untrue and definitely harmful, because contradicting the belief in human progress which has gradually dawned upon reasoning men. But, when asked, "What is to be the religion of the future ?" Stephen, true to his agnostic principles, answers, "I have not the slightest idea. I am perfectly certain of my own ignorance, and I have a strong impression that almost every one else is equally ignorant." Still he gives some faint indications of the possibilities. Science, he thinks, "has the key of the position. The common-sense of mankind, as well as their lower passions, would crush any open attack upon the tangible material results of modern scientific progress."

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One understands, then, why he devoted so much of the best thought of his middle years to his work on *The Science of Ethics*. He had, to a great extent, remade his life. After two years of sorrow and loneliness he found fresh happiness, and his little girl a second mother, through his marriage to Mrs. Herbert Duckworth. Once more he had a happy family circle, for, besides her three children and his little daughter, two sons and two daughters were born to her and Leslie Stephen. He found, too, increasing recognition of his gifts

as a writer. Through his editorship of the *Dictionary* he may be said to have founded what was almost a school of biography. And when ill-health obliged him to give up the strain of so much work, he fell back upon his favourite study of the Utilitarians and finished it during the saddened closing years of his life, when he was once more a widower. The second Mrs. Stephen died in 1897, and he survived her for over six years. But he was tenderly cared for by his children and stepchildren.

The Science of Ethics was, however, written in the early years of his happy second marriage. It represents the maturity of his thought, his effort to state as lucidly as might be what were those principles of morality in which he believed, and which were to help him, as an agnostic, "to live and die like a gentleman." The book owes, of course, a good deal to Herbert Spencer, who had done so much to revise philosophy in the light of Darwin's discoveries. But though Stephen acknowledges the debt fully, it is clear that he was repelled by Spencer's metaphysical speculations. "The unknowable . . . is not made into a reality by its capital letter." As regards the theory of knowledge, the last word for him was with Hume. His greatest debt was to John Stuart Mill and, on the scientific side, to Darwin direct. Spencer's work seemed to him derivative, and Sidgwick's view of the relation of evolution to ethics did not commend itself to him.

His aim he defines in words which recall Spencer, "to lay down an ethical doctrine in

harmony with the doctrine of evolution." Metaphysics are to be ruled out. Metaphysical reasoning, he appears to think, is quite distinct from scientific reasoning (an odd conviction!), and knowledge can be obtained in the region of the physical sciences "entirely independent of the metaphysician's theories. . . . May we not discover propositions about the relations of men to each other, and the internal relations of the individual human being which will be equally independent of metaphysical disputes?" He strives, therefore, to get moral questions into the region of science—"a region in which all metaphysical tenets are indifferent"—and proceeds to an examination of the facts, which are the subject-matter of ethics, viz. the emotions and the reason in relation to conduct, the motives actuating men in social relations, the forms which the moral law has assumed, the virtues, their connexion with happiness, the conscience, the moral sanctions. The tone of the whole treatise is severely scientific. Its outcome is an enlightened utilitarianism. A moral rule is "a statement of a condition of social welfare," proved to be such by scientific observation and comparison. Moral problems "can only be examined when we have some knowledge of the organisation of man and of society, which is unattainable by any other than the scientific method." To prove, for instance, drunkenness to be socially mischievous is to prove it to be wicked. "Morality is a product of the social factor."

Ethics, then, is the child of sociology, and

sociology is a science to be studied by the historical method and the method of experiment. It is a somewhat arid creed. No wonder that Leslie Stephen was disposed to belittle the influence of the moralist. "He accepts human nature as it is, and he tries to show how it may maintain and improve the advantages already acquired. His influence is little enough; but, such as it is, it depends upon the fact that a certain harmony has already come into existence. . . . It is happy for the world that moral progress has not to wait till an unimpeachable system of ethics has been elaborated."

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It is, perhaps, also happy for the world that there have been moral teachers more inspired, if less conscientiously scientific, than Leslie Stephen. One suspects that he was a philosopher more from a sense of duty than from an irresistible impulse to philosophising. Had it been otherwise, he would, perhaps, have been less content to turn his back upon metaphysics without a more searching examination of its claim. But he was the product of an age, and of a university, inclined to exalt scientific method almost above scientific discoveries, and to allow more play to scientific analysis than to scientific imagination. It is curious that Oxford, dogmatic in its theology, has always been more inclined to metaphysical speculation, whereas Cambridge makes up for the fluidity of its divinity by restricting its moral philosophy within very narrow limits.

Stephen's more human and imaginative qualities

he gave to literature, not to philosophy. It is as a biographer that he has the greatest claim to remembrance, and biography needs human insight and human sympathy, qualities in which this most lovable of friends was in no way deficient. His Lives of his brother, of Fawcett, of Swift, Johnson, Pope, George Eliot, are models of their kind, the last especially sympathetic and discriminating in its criticism. And the literary essays, which he republished as *Hours in a Library* and *Studies of a Biographer*, prove his gifts as a critic of letters.

Why, then, did he philosophise? In the first place, no doubt, because the study of the eighteenth century deists led on naturally to rationalism and to the nineteenth century utilitarians. But, secondly, because he firmly believed that every man should think out his own creed, that moral problems "require to be discussed in every generation with a change of dialect," and that it is much "if one can communicate the very slightest impetus to the slowly grinding wheels of speculation." More he did not hope to do, and perhaps more cannot be claimed for him. His greatest achievement as a freethinker is just his clear thinking and plain speaking. He did not greatly advance ethical or sociological theory. He deliberately did nothing for the other branches of philosophy. Where religion and theology were concerned, he was destructive, not constructive. But he did for the cultured classes what Bradlaugh had done for the uncultured. He was, in his way, quite as much of an iconoclast without any of the

coarseness of attack which would have revolted those he sought to help.

Now and again a phrase escaped him, which was perhaps unnecessarily wounding, as, for instance, that Christianity had "to provide a God-man; to bring together into some sort of unity two conceptions so heterogeneous as that of the ground of all existence and that of a particular peasant in Galilee." But, for the most part, whilst fully exemplifying his own principle that "every man who says frankly and fully what he thinks is so far doing a public service," he contrived to render that service without any unnecessary or offensive scorn. He did not seek to proselytise. Conversion, in the religious sense, appeared to him an absurdity. He had no anxiety to thrust his views upon others, but neither would he conceal them. Free himself and the defender of freedom for others, he believed that toleration was unconditionally and necessarily conducive to happiness, and that Christian orthodoxy, with its inevitable tendency to ally itself with the conservative forces of society, was a real danger to human progress. And, by his own life, and by the courage and serenity of spirit, with which he faced a long and painful illness that could have but one end, he impressed upon all who came near him, that Christianity was not needed to help a man "to die like a gentleman."

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The Playground of Europe.
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Speaking (with Introductory
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HARRIET MARTINEAU (1802-1876)

HARRIET MARTINEAU'S place in the history of free thought is fixed, not so much by the positive value of her contribution to nineteenth-century philosophy as by her assertion of a woman's right to think. Few indeed of her sex before her dared to have opinions at all, still less to express them. Yet here was a young woman, reared in the provinces, coming to London at the age of thirty and taking the town by storm. Moreover, not in the field of imaginative literature, or in any branch of science "suited to the gentler sex," but as a hard-headed political thinker and economist, whose advice was eagerly sought by Cabinet Ministers and by social reformers of the most advanced type. Such a position would be astonishing for an Englishwoman even now; it was little short of a miracle in the year of the Reform Bill. And its effect upon the general estimate of women's powers, though somewhat delayed, could not fail in the long run to be revolutionary.

Of course, like all other able women of the nineteenth century, Harriet Martineau was hailed as an exception, not as an example. It is only across the Atlantic that women's achievements



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HARRIET MARTINEAU
(At the age of 48.)

are even now regarded as natural. Recognition here is not wanting ; but men continue to be surprised when they meet with first-rate ability and first-rate work in a woman. Miss Martineau was before her time. Full admission of woman's claim to equal citizenship lagged a century behind, and equal facilities for education were still being fought for, forty years after her pamphlets were swaying the counsels of Cabinets. But her history shows plainly that the gates of knowledge always stood ajar to any woman, so far emancipated from the prejudices of her sex as to make a determined effort to enter.

It is true that the bars to equal education had not yet been broken down. Girls' schools were modelled on the lines of Miss Pinkerton's famous academy for long after Victoria came to the throne. The universities had not even contemplated the possibility of Fellows having wives ; they were horrified fifty years later at the mere suggestion of girl graduates. But schools and universities are not the only paths to knowledge. There are books and there is the world. Harriet made good use of the first and, in spite of her limited faculties, looked out for herself over the second. She formed her own views on social problems, and when necessity drove her to make use of her pen, she found herself able to illustrate those views so forcibly and picturesquely that within a few weeks she was winning general recognition as one of the foremost economists of her time. It was an unprecedented position for any young writer of either sex, and it had been attained by a girl from

Norwich, home bred and home educated except for a couple of years' attendance at a mixed grammar school in her native town, and a year and a half's study in Bristol under a well-known Unitarian clergyman.

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Her home was in East Anglia, the same country as her contemporary, Frederick Maurice, and she sprang from much the same social and religious *milieu*. She also was one of a large family, the children of a Norwich manufacturer of Huguenot extraction and Unitarian faith. The Martineaus had come over from France at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. David Martineau, the first of a line of surgeons of the name, then settled in Norwich and married a countrywoman of his own, also a refugee. A love of liberty for conscience' sake was, therefore, hereditary. So, too, was the quickness of intelligence characteristic of the Huguenot immigrants.

Harriet's own mother was a Northumbrian, Elizabeth Rankin, the daughter of a Newcastle sugar refiner. She was a woman of character, stern, self-disciplined, without the expansiveness of the Huguenot strain and somewhat wanting, not perhaps in sympathy with her children, but in power of expressing it. Such of them as were sensitive suffered in consequence; Harriet, who was not only sensitive but also morbid and neurotic, suffered probably the most of all. A good deal must, no doubt, be discounted from her own account of her childish sorrows. Her brother, James, thinks that her memories of early life were

distorted by her later moods, and that her deafness and consequent habit of introspection falsified her pictures of the past. His own tribute to his mother ascribes to her "the beginnings of literary culture in our household. She had enjoyed perhaps fewer educational advantages early in life than her husband had done, but she had quick perceptions, indomitable energy, and wonderful tact in making the most of opportunities." Certainly she had at least two wonderful children, Harriet and James, sixth and seventh in a family of eight sons and daughters.

Harriet has herself written the story of their childhood in that *Autobiography* which, with all its egotism and no doubt unconscious exaggeration, remains such a self-revealing human document. It is not of course contemporary. She did not record her thoughts in early years except in her published writings, and she had such strong views about the non-preservation of intimate letters that she thought it worth while to quarrel seriously with her beloved brother James, because he would not agree to burn all she had ever sent him. But in 1855, when she believed herself to be standing face to face with death, she felt it her duty to leave some record of what she recognised as a remarkable experience. At so solemn a moment so serious a person could not but strive to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Hence the world is the richer by a revelation of a strong woman's soul and a picture of a commanding, if not always engaging, personality.

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The childish part is soon told. There were very few happenings in that Norwich home. Occasional journeys by post-chaise to visit the maternal relatives at Newcastle were the most momentous events. For the rest, it is a record of "soul states" not uncommon with religious children; and Harriet was a very religious child. At seven years old she describes religion as her chief happiness and says that, though timid and nervous with men and women, she was never afraid of God. In her more morbid moods she seriously contemplated suicide as a means of getting to the Heaven she longed for. No doubt she was neurotic and "difficult," and that was not an age of individual child-study. Children were expected to conform to a well-known nursery code. Even in matters of diet there could be no exception. Milk was "good for them," and, therefore, milk they must have, even if it radically disagreed with them, as it did with Harriet, who was all her life long a martyr to dyspepsia.

In the same way it was a thing unheard of for a well-brought up girl not to be able to make her own clothes. Sewing was no penance to Harriet; throughout her life she enjoyed it. But time for reading was sadly curtailed by the hours and hours occupied in sitting at her needle, and she tried to make up by robbing herself of sleep. Here is her own account—

"I sewed indefatigably all those years, being in truth excessively fond of sewing, with the amusement of either gossiping or learning poetry by heart from a book lying open under my work. . . . While thus busy

I made literally all my clothes as I grew up, except stays and shoes. I platted bonnets at one time, knitted stockings as I read aloud, covered silk shoes for dances, and made all my garments. . . . The amount of time spent in sewing now appears frightful ; but it was the way in those days among people like ourselves. . . . Thus was I saved from being a literary lady who could not sew ; and when, in after years, I have been insulted by admiration at not being helpless in regard to household employments, I have been wont to explain, for my mother's sake, that I could make shirts and puddings, and iron and mend, and get my bread by my needle, if necessary (as it once was necessary for a few months), before I won a better place and occupation with my pen."

Again, in describing her early passion for knowledge, she says—

"When I was young it was not thought proper for young ladies to study very conspicuously ; and especially with pen in hand. Young ladies (at least in provincial towns) were expected to sit down in the parlour to sew—during which reading aloud was permitted—or to practise their music ; but so as to be fit to receive callers without any signs of blue-stockings which could be reported abroad. . . . Thus my first studies in philosophy were carried on with great care and reserve. I was at the work table regularly after breakfast—making my own clothes or the shirts of the household, or about some fancy work ; I went out walking along with the rest—before dinner in winter and after tea in summer ; and if ever I shut myself into my own room for an hour of solitude, I knew it was at the risk of being sent for to join the sewing circle or to read aloud—I being the reader on account of my growing deafness. But I won time

for what my heart was set upon, nevertheless—either in the early morning or late at night.”

In 1829 the death of the father and the complete failure of the family finances obliged her to work for money. She had already shown that she could write. Her first contribution to the *Monthly Repository* had won from her sympathetic eldest brother something more than mere recognition. “Now, dear,” (endearments were rare in their family) “leave it to other women to make shirts and darn stockings; and do you devote yourself to this,” he said gravely, laying his hand on her shoulder. She “went home in a sort of dream, so that the squares of the pavement seemed to float before my eyes. That evening made me an authoress.”

But it did not make the rest of the family believe in her. She could, and did, earn by fancy work a good many pounds. That was a certainty, or so her mother thought, not lightly to be abandoned for chimerical dreams of authorship. So, even after two or three stories had been published and poorly paid for—

“My own heart was often very near sinking—as were my bodily forces; and with reason. During the daylight hours of that winter (1829–30) I was poring over fine fancy work, by which alone I earned any money; and after tea I went upstairs to my room for my day’s literary labour. The quantity I wrote, at prodigious expenditure of nerve, surprises me now—after my long breaking-in to hard work. Every night that winter, I believe, I was writing till two, or even three in the morning—obeying always the rule of the house—of being

present at the breakfast table as the clock struck eight. Many a time I was in such a state of nervous exhaustion and distress that I was obliged to walk to and fro in the room before I could put on paper the last line of a page, or the last half sentence of an essay or review. Yet was I very happy."

The shock was all the greater when she was peremptorily recalled from a London visit where, after a desperate struggle, she had at last, she thought, secured work, because a well-meaning friend opined that "not literature but needle-work" was the way in which she could earn money. "In that career," wrote this officious lady, "she shall always have the encouragement and support of myself and my family"! But the following year she won the three prizes offered by the Central Unitarian Association for pamphlets commending the Unitarian faith to Catholics, Jews, and Mohammedans respectively. After this success had been publicly announced, there could be no further question of her fitness for authorship.

Such a strain of over-work, following upon a delicate childhood, could not but have serious after-effects. There was much ground to make up. Education all through had been desultory. Harriet and her next sister, Rachel, were taught for some time by brothers and sisters very little older than themselves. One brother taught them Latin, another writing and arithmetic, and from an elder sister they learned—

"French, reading, and exercises. We did not get on well except with the Latin. Our sister expected too much from us, both morally and intellectually. . . . We

owed to her, however, a thorough grounding in our French grammar. . . . As for Henry, he made our lessons in arithmetic, etc., his funny time of day; and sorely did his practical jokes and ludicrous severity afflict us. . . . The worst waste of time, energy, money, and expectation was my music."

Not that Harriet was unmusical, but she was so nervous that she could never sing or play before others, and her music-master was so irritable that his visits were a terror. It was with unbounded relief that she heard of his sudden death, though she was filled with remorse at her untimely, but most natural, joy.

Fortunately for the two children they were sent for a couple of years, when Harriet was eleven, to a boys' school kept by the Rev. Isaac Perry, an orthodox Nonconformist clergyman suddenly converted to Unitarianism. His conversion had cost him most of his pupils, and the members of his new congregation tried to make it up to him by sending him their children. It was a mixed school, the girls sitting in front and the boys behind. The teaching was thorough and progress rapid—

"I have never since felt more deeply and thoroughly the sense of progression that I now began to do. . . . We learned Latin from the old Eton grammar, which I, therefore, and against all reason, cling to—remembering the repetition days (Saturdays) when we recited all that Latin, prose and verse, which occupied us four hours. . . . We certainly attained a capability of enjoying some of the classics, even before the two years were over. Cicero, Virgil, and a little of Horace were our main reading;

and afterwards I took great delight in Tacitus. I believe it was a genuine understanding and pleasure, because I got into the habit of thinking in Latin, and had something of the same pleasure in sending myself to sleep with Latin as with English poetry. Moreover, we stood the test of verse-making."

English composition, taught by somewhat original methods, was Harriet's favourite study. Next to that came arithmetic—

"My pleasure in the working of numbers is something inexplicable to me—as much as any pleasures of sensation. I used to spend my play hours in covering my slate with sums, washing them out and covering the slate again. The fact is, however, that we had no lessons that were not pleasant. That was the season of my entrance upon an intellectual life. In an intellectual life I found then, as I have found since, refuge from moral suffering and an always unexhausted spring of moral strength and enjoyment."

It is a vivid picture of the dawn of intellectual pleasure and must come home to many, who remember their own early delight in manipulating numbers, just as older players manipulate patience cards. But, remember, this child was only thirteen, and she had these advantages for only two years, since poor Mr. Perry still failed to make ends meet and had to abandon his school. There followed a period of home lessons, Latin and French taught by masters, general literature, history and biography learned by reading aloud. Harriet's health was delicate at this time, and her mind, as she says, "ill at ease."

"It was a depressed and wrangling life ; and I have no doubt I was as disagreeable as possible. The great calamity of my deafness was now opening upon me. . . . My religion was a partial comfort to me ; and books and music were a great resource ; but they left a large margin over for wretchedness."

"This is not quarrelling," says the Bishop in Mr. Bernard Shaw's *Getting Married* ; "it's only English family life." Still, some indulgence she did meet with. After the cloth was drawn for dessert she was allowed to creep away and read Shakespeare in the firelight, or to pore over the newspapers. In most middle-class households she would have been asked if she had no work to do, for "work" to mothers of families, even as late as the 'sixties and 'seventies, was merely a shortened form of "needlework." They recognised no other.

The deafness was a serious incapacity and a sore trial to nerves and temper. Her family at first thought it her own fault and accused her of inattention. Next they decided to ignore it and insisted on her "going out" in society as usual. She was the object of perpetual criticism. She became jealous and morose. An outburst, of which she was afterwards much ashamed, brought matters to a climax. After an argument about some trivial matter she accused her mother of always agreeing with her sister Rachel against her. Her mother sternly told her to go to her prayers and ask God for forgiveness. Nothing more was said ; but henceforth a special effort was made to show impartial justice, and it was decided

to send Harriet for a time to a school at Bristol, kept by an aunt and cousins, who were people of great gifts and superior education—

“ I still think that I never met with a family to compare with theirs for power of acquisition, or effective use of knowledge. They would learn a new language at odd minutes ; get through a tough philosophical book by taking turns in the court for air ; write down an entire lecture or sermon without missing a sentence ; get round the piano after a concert and play and sing over every new piece that had been performed.”

But the most valuable part of the more sympathetic Bristol atmosphere was the growth of affection and consequent increase of happiness. Religion, too, was strengthened and deepened in Harriet by the influence of Dr. Carpenter, to whom she became sincerely devoted, though in after life she was inclined to belittle his influence and says that he was “ superficial in his knowledge, scanty in his ability, narrow in his conceptions, and thoroughly priestly in his temper.” This was not, however, James Martineau’s estimate of him. “ I have never seen in any human being the idea of duty, the feeling of right, held in such visible reverence,” he wrote of his old master ; and even in his own old age he still looked back to his association with Dr. Carpenter as an “ inestimable privilege.”

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At seventeen Harriet returned home to take up the life of a grown-up young lady. Dr. Carpenter had turned her thoughts to Biblical

study and to philosophy. She read Hartley in Dr. Priestley's edition with avidity, though always under the rose as became a young lady, and passed on to the Scottish school, especially to Dugald Stewart. Like most thoughtful children she had often puzzled over the doctrine of free will. Having discovered that there was a philosophical doctrine of Necessity, she read every book she could hear of on the Will. "The moral effect of this process," she says—

"was most salutary and cheering. From the time when I became convinced of the certainty of the action of laws, of the true importance of good influences and good habits, of the firmness in short of the ground I was treading, and of the security of the results which I should take the right means to attain, a new vigour pervaded my whole life, a new light spread through my mind. . . . My life has been (whatever else) a very busy one; and this conviction of the invariable action of fixed laws has certainly been the mainspring of my activity."

A mind so drawn to laws as to a loadstone was certain to be attracted by the new science of political economy. But for the moment Harriet had not yet met with economic books. The first effect of her new-found Necessarianism was to change her view of prayer. It did not in any sense upset her religion, at least for a time; but it made her see the unreason of praying for definite objects if the course of Nature was unchangeable, and it gradually predisposed her to disbelief in miracles. But as the more lax among the

Unitarians held that miracles neither support, nor deflect from, the truth of Christian doctrine, she was able still to hold to their comfortable faith.

The time of trial was nearly over ; the years of brilliant success were at hand. But first, combined with family bereavement and loss of income, came a special sorrow to herself in the sad termination of her only love affair. Some time previously she had met in York a Mr. Worthington, a friend of her brother's, and they had been mutually attracted. But he was delicate and poor, and he did not venture to come forward with a definite proposal until he knew that she was no longer in prosperous circumstances. The engagement brought little happiness.

"I was at first very anxious and unhappy. My veneration for his *morale* was such that I felt I dared not undertake the charge of his happiness ; and yet I dared not refuse, because I saw it would be his deathblow. I was ill—I was deaf—I was in an entangled state of mind between conflicting duties and some lower considerations ; and many a time did I wish, in my fear that I should fail, that I had never seen him."

This was not a promising state of mind for an engaged young lady, and Harriet was probably perfectly right when she wrote, nearly thirty years later, in the *Autobiography*—

"It was happiest for us both that our union was prevented by any means. I am, in truth, very thankful for not having married at all. I have never since been tempted, nor have suffered anything at all in relation

to that matter which is held to be all-important to woman—love and marriage.”

That is a frank and self-revealing statement. She was all through life the reverse of sentimental and far too self-centred to have made another person happy. Moreover, her relations, first with her mother and later with her brother, do not point to her being a comfortable person to live with, though she herself has always an excellent explanation of other people's ill-will and misunderstanding. But the circumstances in which the engagement ended had a peculiar sadness.

“Just when I was growing happy, surmounting my fears and doubts and enjoying his attachment, the consequences of his long struggle and suspense overtook him. He became suddenly insane, and after months of illness of body and mind, he died.”

When he lay dying his mother asked Harriet to come. Her own mother forbade her to go. She obeyed, like a dutiful daughter, and her refusal was cruelly misinterpreted and resented by the Worthington family. Her biographer, Mrs. Fenwick Miller, appears to think that Harriet suffered keenly afterwards; but there is no trace in her own authenticated record of any excessive feeling, and the essay, *In a Death Chamber*, upon which Mrs. Miller relies for this opinion, may, or may not, be autobiographical. Harriet's own common-sense utterances about marriage have a more authentic sound.

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Certainly she turned quickly to work, a sensible course in any case. For five or six years she had been contributing short essays and stories of an "improving" character to the *Monthly Repository*, the organ of the Unitarians, and she had published various tracts and moral tales with Messrs. Houlston, of Shrewsbury. It was in 1827, the year after Mr. Worthington's death, that she first met with Mrs. Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy* and conceived the plan that made her famous.

"I took up the book, chiefly to see what Political Economy precisely was; and great was my surprise to find that I had been teaching it unawares in my stories about Machinery and Wages. It struck me at once that the principles of the whole science might be advantageously conveyed in the same way—not by being smothered up in a story, but by being exhibited in their natural workings in selected passages of social life. . . . I mentioned my notion, I remember, when we were sitting at work one bright afternoon at home. Brother James nodded assent; my mother said 'do it;' and we went to tea, unconscious what a great thing we had done since dinner."

It was years, however, before the series could be begun, years of great struggle and difficulty. Without money and with few literary acquaintances, Harriet scarcely knew to whom to turn. Twenty pounds paid by Darton and Harvey for a tale called *Five Years of Youth* kept her going whilst she wrote the prize essays. The forty-five guineas they produced helped her to go to her brother in Dublin for a while, and there she

sketched out her plan. She believed in it thoroughly herself, which was half the battle—

“The whole business was the strongest act of will that I ever committed myself to; and my will was always a pretty strong one. I could never have even started my project but for my thorough, well-considered, steady conviction that the work was wanted—was even craved by the popular mind. . . . I was resolved that . . . the thing should be done. The people wanted the book and they should have it. . . . I knew I was right; and people who are aware that they are in the right need never lose temper.”

A statement as characteristic as it is true!

But though various publishers were disposed to bite, none would swallow the idea whole. It was the year of the Reform Bill and of the cholera. The public were scared and preoccupied. At length Mr. Fox, editor of the *Repository*, persuaded his brother to make the venture, but on terms humiliating to Harriet. She went up to town and was told that five hundred subscribers must be found in advance. Even when that was reluctantly agreed to, Mr. Fox wanted the whole scheme changed, because James Mill thought a didactic treatise would have a better chance. At last he agreed that the series might begin, if his brother were free to withdraw at the end of two numbers, unless a thousand copies sold in the first fortnight. Harriet accepted his terms, but she was nearly at the end of her resources. She was staying in a cousin's house in Shoreditch—

“I set out to walk the four miles and a half to the Brewery. I could not afford to ride, more or less; but,

weary already, I now felt almost too ill to walk at all. On the road, not far from Shoreditch, I became too giddy to stand without support ; and I leaned over some dirty palings, pretending to look at a cabbage bed, but saying to myself, as I stood with closed eyes, ' My book will do yet.' I moved on as soon as I could, apprehending that the passers-by took me to be drunk ; but the pavement swam before my eyes so that I was glad enough to get to the Brewery. I tried to eat some dinner ; but the vast rooms, the plate, and the liveried servant were too touching a contrast to my present condition ; and I was glad to go to work, and drown my disappointment in a flow of ideas. Perhaps the piece of work that I did may show that I succeeded. I wrote the Preface to my *Illustrations of Political Economy* that evening, and I hardly think that any one would discover from it that I had that day sunk to the lowest point of discouragement about my scheme. At eleven o'clock I sent the servants to bed. I finished the Preface just after the Brewery clock had struck two. I was chilly and hungry ; the lamp burned low, and the fire was small. I knew it would not do to go to bed, to dream over again the bitter disappointment of the morning. I began now, at last, to doubt whether my work would ever see the light. I thought of the multitudes who needed it—and especially of the poor—to assist them in managing their own welfare. I thought too of my own conscious power of doing this very thing. As the fire crumbled, I put it together till nothing but dust and ashes remained ; and when the lamp went out, I lighted the chamber candle ; but at last it was necessary to go to bed ; and at four o'clock I went, after crying for two hours with my feet on the fender. I cried in bed till six, when I fell asleep ; but I was at the breakfast table by half-past eight, and ready for the work of the day."

Such were the struggles of a woman writer in 1831. It needed an indomitable spirit to win through them. But Harriet's spirit was always indomitable. She went back to Norwich—"thin, yellow, and coughing with every breath"—to send out her circulars and to write her early Numbers. Encouragement came from a few quarters, notably from a rich uncle at Clapham, who not only subscribed for copies but paid in advance, and from the great Norwich banking house of the Gurneys. The publisher grew more and more gloomy. But the first edition of the first Number ran out in ten days, and a letter from the publisher announced the need of a reprint, which grew with every postscript and finally reached five thousand.

Success had come in one bound. Publishers vied with one another to buy the series and secure its future issue. Letters came from all quarters. Members of Parliament sent blue books in such masses that the local postmaster begged Miss Martineau to have her mail fetched in a barrow, as it could not be carried. Lord Brougham's "little deaf woman at Norwich" had conquered. Henceforth the metropolis was the only fit field for her labours.

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She went up to London one dark foggy November day, and established herself in a tailor's house in Conduit Street up two pair of stairs. Her social success was immediate, in spite of deafness and all its drawbacks. It was not only Lord Brougham who was laughingly curious to meet her. But she set herself, with perhaps a

slightly priggish self-consciousness, to evade being lionised. The priggishness had its deeper and truer reason in her general devotion to work—

“ Authorship has never been with me a matter of choice. I have not done it for amusement, or for money, or for fame, or for any reason, but because I could not help it. Things were pressing to be said ; and there was more or less evidence that I was the person to say them. In such a case it was always impossible to decline the duty for such reasons as that I should like more leisure, or more amusement, or more sleep, or more of anything whatever. If my life had depended on more leisure and holiday, I could not have taken it.”

This was as true and as sincerely felt as her conviction that—

“ I became the fashion, and might have been the lion of several seasons if I had chosen to permit it. I detested the idea, and absolutely put down the practice in my own case ; but I saw as much of a very varied society as if I had allowed myself to be lionised, and with a more open mind than if I had not insisted on being treated simply as a lady or let alone.”

One respects the independence that would brook neither adulation nor patronage, especially on the part of a young woman whose “ going out ” in Norwich had been so painful—

“ My deafness (there) was terribly in the way, both because it made me shy, and because underbred people like the card-players and dancers of a provincial town, are awkward in such a case. Very few people spoke to me, and I daresay I looked as if I did not wish to be spoken to. From the time when I went to London, all that was changed. People . . . came to me with

good will, or they would not have come at all. . . . I now found what the real pleasures of social intercourse are, and was deeply sensible of its benefits."

All of which is very commendable, if it had not been followed by self-conscious anecdotes of attempts at lionising, somewhat ungraciously frustrated, such as the tale of the "physician in immense practice," who entreated her "to name her own day and hour," and "not only led me through all the servants in the hall, but leaned into my hackney coach to thank me for the honour," etc.

That is typical Harriet, complacent, a little acidulated and ready to set down intruders. Something of this temper pervades all her comments upon her wide social acquaintance, from the Lord and Lady Lansdowne of the period down to humbler folk.

"I never would go to Lansdowne House, because I knew that I was invited there as an authoress, to undergo, as people did at that house, the most delicate and refined process of being lionised—but still the process. The Marquis and Marchioness of Lansdowne . . . caused me to be introduced to them . . . and their not being introduced to my mother, who was with me, showed the footing on which I stood. . . . I was invited to every kind of party at Lansdowne House—a concert, a state dinner, a friendly dinner party, a small evening party, and a ball; and I declined them all. I went nowhere but where my acquaintance was sought as a lady, by ladies."

She was told that—

“ Lady Lansdowne, being one of the Queen’s ladies, and Lord Lansdowne, being a Cabinet Minister, could not make calls. If so, it made no difference in my disinclination to go, in a blue-stocking way, to a house where I was not really acquainted with anybody. . . . I felt I must take my own methods of preserving my social independence.”

But, whilst applauding her spirit, it is impossible not to recognise that it would have been perhaps better breeding to accept simply and graciously the social recognition she had won, and not to scent patronage at every turn. There is overmuch self-assertion, too, in her sensitiveness to rumours of literary debts to Brougham and others, who had furnished her with material and sought her help. It is pleasanter to read her record of friendship with Lord and Lady Durham, Sydney Smith, the Hallams, the Carlyles, Malthus, Rogers, Mrs. Somerville, and many others.

She disliked Macaulay and thought him unreliable, and she mocks at the vanity of many men and women of letters, such as Whewell and Lady Austin. But all the prig in her was roused by Thackeray (did he know it, one wonders?). “ I confess to being unable to read *Vanity Fair*, from the moral disgust it occasions ” ! She relented, however, as regards *Pendennis*, and *Esmond* appeared to her “ *the* book of the century, in its department.” Still she thought Thackeray a snob—“ his frittered life and his obedience to the call of the great are the observed of all observers.” Dickens, on the other hand, seems to have been her ideal of the “ virtuous and happy

family man," with "a glowing and generous heart, kept steady by the best domestic influences." But this was in 1851; perhaps she revised the estimate later.

After ten months of London she had been joined by her mother and aunt, and they took a small house in Fludyer Street, Westminster. There seem to have been some heartburnings—

"My mother's delight in her new social sphere was extreme. But, as I had anticipated, troubles arose. For one of two great troubles meddlers and mischief-makers were mainly answerable. The other could not be helped. It was (to pass it over as lightly as possible) that my mother, who loved power, and had always been in the habit of exercising it, was hurt at confidence being reposed in me, and I, with every desire to be passive . . . was kept in a state of constant agitation at the influx of distinctions which I never sought and which it was impossible to impart. What the meddlers and mischief-makers did was to render my old ladies, and especially my mother, discontented with the lowliness of our home. They were for ever suggesting that I ought to live in some sort of style—to have a larger house in a better street, and lay out our mode of living for the society in which I was moving."

Clearly all was not peace in Fludyer Street, and dissensions between mothers and daughters are not an invention of the late nineteenth century. Harriet was perfectly right not to "mortgage her brains" by swelling her expenses. She says she always had Scott's awful example before her. But there is a conscious rectitude about her account of her domestic interior, which must have

been rather trying, if it was reflected in daily intercourse. Still these home difficulties added to the strain of work, and after six years the London life ended in a complete break-down of health.

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Before that occurred, however, the *Illustrations of Political Economy*, as well as the *Illustrations of Poor Laws and Paupers* and the *Illustrations of Taxation*, were finished, and she had paid a visit to America for rest and change. She speaks with enthusiasm of the peace of the voyage. It was four years before steam transport began to the States, and the quickest passage took a month. In her case it was prolonged to six weeks, and she says she "enjoyed few things in life more than the certainty of being out of the way of the post, of news, and of passing strangers." But she arrived when the slavery question was acute, and her reputation as an abolitionist had already preceded her. She roused a good deal of animosity; but on the other hand she made some valuable friends. Mrs. Maria Weston Chapman, in particular, was a great support of her later years.

On her return she published two books on America and did a good deal to awaken sympathy for the Anti-Slavery Party in England by an article in the *Westminster Review*, which she called "The Martyr Age of the United States." All her political sympathies were on the side of freedom, even of republicanism. She attended Queen Victoria's Coronation as a spectacle; but the reflections it induced were mainly on the futility of kingship.

“ It strengthened instead of relaxing my sense of the unreal character of monarchy in England. . . . After all was said and sung, the sovereign remained a nominal ruler, who could not govern by her own mind and will ; who had influence, but no political power ; a throne and crown, but with the knowledge of everybody that the virtue had gone out of them. . . . There is, I believe, no public religious service which is not offensive to thoughtful and reverent persons, from its ascription of human faculties, affections, qualities, and actions, to the assumed First Cause of the universe ; but the Jewish or heathen ascription to Him of military and aristocratic rank and regal prerogative, side by side with the same ascription to the Queen, was the most coarse and irreverent celebration that I was ever a witness to.”

This, written eighteen years after the event, represents, no doubt, her later view, when she had progressed farther on the path of free thought than in 1837. But she was beginning to think very independently of religion even before that date, and the five years of her illness sent her back to the world an emancipated woman. She had spent those five years in lodgings at Tynemouth, away from any member of her family, though visited by them and by friends and zealously tended by a devoted little servant. The time was not entirely unproductive. She wrote *Feats on the Fiord* and other tales for children, a novel called *The Hour and the Man*, and an anonymous book, *Life in the Sick-room*—introspective and, as she herself says in her later Comtist years, “dismally self-conscious.” But she was in a transition state—

“ I was lingering in the metaphysical stage of mind, because I was not perfectly emancipated from the *débris* of the theological. The day of final release from both was drawing nigh. . . . I had quitted the old untenable point of view, and had not yet found the one on which I was soon to take my stand.”

Release from the actual sick-room came by way of mesmerism and the friendship of Mr. Henry G. Atkinson, with whom she was afterwards to discuss and elucidate so many problems of life and mind. The cure was not effected without some family jars. Her relations did not go quite so far as Elizabeth Barrett's father, but seem to have resented the manner, if not the fact, of her recovery. Less was then known of the pathology of the nerves, and treatment by suggestion was unrecognised in medical circles. A tumour had been diagnosed as the cause of her illness ; but no doubt a great part of the weakness and consequent suffering was nervous, and amenable to mesmeric treatment.

The case made a considerable stir. She had the reputation of a sane and strong-minded woman, and it was impossible to put either the illness, or its cure, down to hysteria. She felt it her duty, for the sake of other sufferers, to place the facts on record and did so in a series of six letters to the *Athenæum*. Thereupon her former medical attendant published, without her consent, a medical account of her illness. He could not, however, explain away the fact that from 1844 to 1854 she had ten years of robust health, “ walking from sixteen to twenty miles in a day on occasion,

and riding a camel in the heart of Nubia, and hundreds of miles on horseback."

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The first use Harriet Martineau made of her newly-recovered health was to establish herself in a home of her own. She was forty-two years old, and she had made the discovery that to be an old maid is not necessarily to lose relish for existence. "At past forty years of age I began to relish life without drawback; and for ten years I have been vividly conscious of its delights." That is an essentially modern touch. Many women have discovered since that, on the whole, they are happier in the maturity of middle age than when youth, and inexperience, and dependence upon masculine opinion were limiting their freedom and their outlook. But it was a discovery rare amongst the early Victorians, and epoch-making for those who made it.

For the rest of her life, prolonged far beyond expectation, The Knoll, Ambleside, was Harriet's home. She did not slacken her literary labours. Between 1844 and 1854 she brought out her *Eastern Life, Past and Present*, her *History of the Thirty Years' Peace*, her translation of Comte's *Philosophie Positive*, and the *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development*, as well as a number of minor works. And it is this period of her life which gives her importance in the field of free thought.

She was an incomparable journalist, the first, perhaps, of all women journalists, not only in time but in quality. What, after all, are the

Illustrations of Political Economy but high-class journalism, elucidating current events? Her very methods are the methods of a journalist. She never re-copied. She wrote "as I write letters, and as I am writing this Memoir—never altering the expression as it came straight from the brain." Of course she made copious notes beforehand; but her style, admirably clear, owed nothing to final polishing.

Towards the end of this decade she became an actual leader writer for the *Daily News*, taking as her province foreign topics, agricultural and educational subjects, as well as any special question which interested her, though not, of course, "the treatment of 'hot and hot' news . . . being several hundred miles out of the way of the latest intelligence." But the recluse of Ambleside turned out her three, four, or sometimes six articles a week with a facility which Fleet Street might envy, and "found that each required only two or three hours in an evening, and *that topics abounded*." There speaks the born journalist, never at a loss for a subject; and it says much for the freshness of her mind and the fertility of her resources that she continued from her Lake retreat to write regularly and acceptably for a great daily paper for fourteen years, as well as to send a vast number of occasional contributions to other periodicals.

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She strikes one as a sort of living embodiment of the Manchester school, faithful always to Liberalism in politics and to freedom of discussion

in philosophy. She quarrelled with Mr. Wills of *Household Words* because of the intolerant attitude adopted in that periodical towards Roman Catholics, and also because of Dickens's expressed views on the Woman question. As she says, he ignored "the fact that nineteen twentieths of the women of England earn their bread" and prescribed the functions of women to be "to dress well and look pretty, as an adornment to the homes of men." She also greatly objected to the travesty of the new Poor Law contained in *Oliver Twist*, and to the treatment of labour questions in *Hard Times*.

The first clear indication of her free philosophic standpoint came in *Eastern Life*, published early in 1848. It was the fruit of a journey through Egypt and Palestine, undertaken at the end of 1846. Passing through the lands, wherein the great historic faiths had had their birth—

"All the historical hints I had gained from my school days onward now rose up amidst a wholly new light. . . . Step by step, as we proceeded, evidence arose of the true character of the faiths which ruled the world ; and my observations issued in a view of their genealogy and its results, which I certainly did not carry with me. . . . It was evident to me, in a way which it could never have been if I had not wandered amidst the old monuments and scenes of the various faiths, that a passage through these latter faiths is as natural to men, and was as necessary in those former periods of human progress, as fetishism is to the infant nations and individuals, without the notion being more true in the one case than in the other."

There speaks the future Comtist ; but Harriet Martineau had reached this position for the most part independently, as she recounts in a letter to Mr. Atkinson, the recipient of all her philosophic confidences. He was himself a believer in mesmerism and a Baconian in philosophy. His original meeting with Harriet had been in the first year of her recovered health ; but, though himself a mesmeric healer, his connexion with her cure was only indirect. He had discussed her case with friends of hers, and had recommended the woman mesmerist actually employed ; but he never himself undertook to treat her mesmerically.

She writes to him from Ambleside after her return from the East—

“ Do you not feel strangely alone in your views of the highest subjects ? I do. I really know of no one but you to whom I can speak freely about mine. To a great degree I always did feel this. I used to long to be a catholic, though I deeply suspected that no reliance on authority would give me peace of mind. . . . But I do feel sadly lonely for this reason—that I could not, if I tried, communicate to any one the feeling that I have that the theological belief of almost everybody in the civilised world is baseless.”

Mr. Atkinson writes back that both he and she may very likely incur obloquy on account of their beliefs, but that “ there are many believing as we believe on vital questions.” She replies in a letter, which recounts much of her mental history—

“ I was *very* religious (far beyond the knowledge and intentions of my parents) till I was quite grown-up. I don't know what I should have done without my faith ;

for I was an unhealthy and most unhappy child. . . . Five and twenty years ago I became a thoroughly grounded necessarian. I have never wavered for an hour on that point since ; and nothing ever gave me so much comfort. Of course this paved the way for the cessation of prayer. I left off praying, however, less from seeing the absurdity (though I did see it) of petitioning about things already ordained, than from a keen sense of the impiety of prayer. . . . So I left off express prayer ; and without remorse. As for Christ's example and need of prayer—I felt that He did not mean what we mean by prayer ; and I think so still. . . . Next I saw very painfully (I mean with the pain of disgust) how much lower a thing it is to lead even the loftiest life from a regard to the will or mind of any other being than from a natural working out of our own powers. I felt this first as to resignation under suffering, and soon after as to moral action. . . . As to what my present views are . . . I feel a most reverential sense of something wholly beyond our apprehensions. . . . If that something were God (as people mean by that word, and I am confident it is not), he would consider those of us the noblest who must have evidence in order to believe. . . . As for the whole series of Faiths, my present studies would have been enough, if I had not been prepared before, to convince me that all the forms of the higher religions contain . . . the same great and noble ideas which arise naturally out of our own minds and grow with the growth of the general mind, but that there is really *no* evidence whatever of any sort of revelation, at any point in the history. . . . I do not deny the possibility of a life after death. . . . But I doubt the desire and belief (concerning it) being so general as they are said to be."

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This question of death, and the complete calmness with which it could be contemplated by those who had no expectation of personal survival, occupies her often. She had more than once in her life had to face it, first during the five years of her illness, and again in 1854, when the doctors told her she had heart disease and probably but a few months to live. She did not believe in that preparation for death by fixing the mind upon it, which the Christian teachers of her day enjoined—

“ I know too much of this from my own experience to choose to do anything towards encouragement of the morbid appetite for pathological contemplation—physical or moral. My youthful vanity took the direction which might be expected in the case of a pious child. I was patient in illness and pain, because I was proud of the distinction and of being taken into such special pupilage by God ; and I hoped for and expected early death till it was too late to die early. It is grievous to me now to think what an amount of time and thought I have wasted in thinking about dying. . . .”

It may be said of Harriet Martineau with truth that nothing in her philosophy better became her than her calm outlook upon death. In 1854 she writes—

“ And now, after a pretty long life, when I find myself really about to die (*ætat* 52) the whole thing seems to me so easy, simple, natural, and as I may say, negative, in comparison with life and its interests, that I cannot but wonder how I could keep my thoughts fixed upon it when it was far off. I cannot do it now. . . . Under this close experience I find death in prospect the simplest

thing in the world—a thing not to be feared or regretted, or to get excited about in any way. . . . I see that the dying (other than the aged) naturally and regularly, unless disturbed, sink into death as into sleep. Where no artificial state is induced, they feel no care about dying, or about living again. The state of their organisation disposes them to rest; and rest is all they think about.”

There is much of the antique philosopher about her attitude and about her final confession of faith—

“Under the eternal laws of the universe I came into being, and, under them, I have lived a life so full that its fullness is equivalent to length. . . . I am frankly satisfied to have done with life. I have had a noble share of it, and I desire no more. I neither wish to live longer here, nor to find life again elsewhere. . . . The world as it is is growing somewhat dim before my eyes; but the world as it is to be looks brighter every day.”

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She was not to have done with the world so soon as she thought. She was to live nearly a quarter of a century still in what seemed to her the fading light of the “best and noblest” of the mythologies. It was characteristic of mid-Victorian freethinkers to expect a more rapid extinction of Christian belief than the subsequent history of thought has justified. To Harriet “the extinction of theology by a true science of human nature” was a matter about which her “expectation amounts to absolute assurance.” The Christian mythology, she thought, was “now

not only sinking to the horizon, but paling in the dawn of a brighter time. . . . The last of the mythologies is about to vanish before the flood of a brighter light."

She had done what she could to spread that light by making Comte's *Positive Philosophy* available to English readers. That had been her main task after the publication of her correspondence with Mr. Atkinson, which, when all was said, did not amount to very much more than that they believed a science of human nature possible, though they seem to have expected both mesmerism and phrenology to play a not inconsiderable part in arriving at it. The *Letters*, however, brought about some sifting of her acquaintance, especially in the neighbourhood of her home, and caused her to be looked at askance by the clerically minded and the orthodox. One leading organ went so far as to call her "a female atheist of European reputation." The publication of this book also led to a final estrangement with her brother James, whose review of it in the *Prospective Review* she so resented that they never met again.

Eastern Life had already shown her to be alive to many of the problems of comparative religion and of the higher criticism, at least a decade before such speculations became at all common in this country. She was certainly an emancipated woman—what, thirty years ago, it was customary to call a "strong-minded" woman, though the phrase is now out of fashion. And she was somewhat aggressive in her assertion of unbelief, at any rate in the *Autobiography*.

Some of her friends thought that, in this record of her life, she painted her own portrait in unnecessarily unpleasing colours. That is the opinion, also, of her biographer, Mrs. Fenwick Miller. But perhaps she knew herself best. No doubt she could be, and was, a kind friend and neighbour, especially to the poorer folk around, though not without a rather uncomfortable zeal for educating and informing them, even against their will. Invalid as she was for all the rest of her life, she still continued to work at advancing the cause of freedom. And she had a lofty contempt for those content to sit in the shadow of darkness—perhaps even a faint idea that not to believe in the religion of Humanity indicated a certain natural depravity of mind.

But in her own time she was recognised as a really great political writer, and there can be no question that she had great influence. Every philanthropist of the secular kind consulted her and sought her aid in obtaining publicity. "Mrs." Martineau, as she called herself in later life, assuming with justice the added dignity of the title conferred in the eighteenth century alike upon married and unmarried ladies of age and standing, was a power in the field of journalism, and a factor with which parliamentary debaters and Ministers alike had to reckon. She was a strong individualist, and viewed with as much distrust as Mill any tendency on the part of the State to encroach upon the sphere of individual action and personal liberty. She even went so far as to deprecate "meddling" factory legislation,

and to attack Trade Unions as instruments of tyranny.

Following on the Indian Mutiny she wrote a series of *Suggestions towards the Future Government of India*, in which she advocated "developing India for the Indians by means of British knowledge and equity," a desirable consummation not yet fully reached. And she had the happiness of seeing the success of abolition in America; indeed, she followed the course of the Civil War with an almost painful anxiety and exaltation of mind. The latest campaign in which she joined was that of Mrs. Josephine Butler, for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts.

She had never thought much of money, and her old age was but ill provided for. To help her, when she could no longer continue her regular journalism, the Editor of the *Daily News* republished, under the title *Biographical Sketches*, a number of the estimates of famous contemporaries, which she had contributed as obituary notices. Earlier in life she had staved off the offer of a State pension which Lord Grey, and later, Lord Melbourne, had been anxious to bestow upon her, fearing that its acceptance would fetter her freedom in political writing. She refused a similar offer from Mr. Gladstone as late as 1873. But she had sufficient for her simple wants, and the care and nursing of devoted nieces. She might be argumentative and domineering; but she had her softer side. Children loved her, and she was devoted to babies; she spent much of her time knitting for them in the last years of her life.

In 1876 she died peacefully in her Lakeside home, and was buried amongst her kindred in Birmingham.

James Payn has drawn a pleasant picture of her in late middle life—

“ She was, no doubt, somewhat masterful in argument, but I always found her very ready to listen, and especially to any tale of woe or hardship which it lay in her power to remedy. . . . Rarely have I known a social companion more bright and cheery ; but her talk, when not engaged in argument, was, which is unusual in a woman, very anecdotal. She had known more interesting and eminent persons than most men, and certainly than any woman of her time ; the immense range of her writings, political, religious, and social, had caused her to make acquaintance with people of the most different opinions and of all ranks, while amongst the large circle of her personal acquaintance, her motherly qualities, her gentleness, and (on delicate domestic questions) her good judgment, made her the confidant of many persons, especially young people, which enlarged her knowledge of human life to an extraordinary degree. I never knew a woman whose nature was more essentially womanly than that of Harriet Martineau.”

* * * * *

Her chief philosophic achievement was a second-hand one, her version of Comte's great work for English readers. She was not an original thinker ; but she had been captivated in middle life by Comte's thought, and she set herself to spread it.

“ My strongest inducement to this enterprise was my deep conviction of our need of this book in my own

country. . . . We are living in a remarkable time, when the conflict of opinions renders a firm foundation of knowledge indispensable. . . . The growth of a scientific taste among the working classes of this country is one of the most striking of the signs of the times. . . . The supreme dread of every one who cares for the good of the nation or race is that men should be adrift for want of an anchorage for their convictions. . . . The work of M. Comte is unquestionably the greatest single effort that has been made to obviate this kind of danger. . . . A thorough familiarity (with it) would avail more to extinguish the anarchy of popular and sectional opinion in this country than has yet been exerted, or, I believe, proposed."

Perhaps she hoped too much from the *Positive Philosophy*, though she made one distinguished convert. Mr. Frederic Harrison records that he read her translation, in his undergraduate days, with the deepest enthusiasm, and that it helped to send him down from Oxford "a Republican, a democrat, and a Freethinker." Equally she over-rated the epoch-making qualities of her friend, Mr. Atkinson's, *Letters Concerning the Laws of Man's Nature and Development*. There were more righteous men in the Sodom of superstition than either he or she had suspected. But her mind was a most valuable epitome of her time; in that respect she was essentially a woman, with a woman's faculty for instinctively reflecting the thoughts current all around her. That assertion of her woman's power of intuition, and her woman's right to develop it by reasoning and to express it in literature, will always be Harriet Martineau's

best claim to be regarded as the pioneer of women's emancipation. And though women might have wished the forerunner of their freedom to appear in more gracious guise, it is ill criticising the outward manifestations of the spirit of liberty as long as the spirit is there.

She was not, as her contemporary, Miss Mitford, truly said, "a woman of genius; all her works are incomplete. Indeed, the only things of hers I ever liked were her political economy stories, which I used to read, skipping the political economy. Fifty years hence she will be heard of as one of the curiosities of our age, but she will not be read." No, she will not be read; but she will be remembered for all time as one of the women—perhaps the first amongst them—who made the nineteenth century the dawn of freedom for half the human race. No woman will ever wish to omit her name from the calendar of freethinkers.

There are many modern touches in her writings and much shrewd wisdom. Speaking of Mary Wollstonecraft and the agitation for women's rights, she says—

"I felt forty years ago . . . just what I feel now in regard to some of the most conspicuous denouncers of the wrongs of women, . . . that their advocacy of women's cause becomes mere detriment, precisely in proportion to their personal reasons for unhappiness. Nobody can be further than I am from being satisfied with the condition of my own sex, under the law and custom of my own country; but I decline all fellowship and co-operation with women of genius or otherwise favourable position, who injure the cause by their

personal tendencies. . . . The best advocates are yet to come—in the persons of women who are obtaining access to real social business—the female physicians and other professors in America” (there were none yet in England), “the women of business and the female artists of France; and the hospital administrators, the nurses, the educators and substantially successful authoresses, of our own country. Often as I am appealed to to speak, or otherwise assist in the promotion of the cause of Woman, my answer is always the same: That women, like men, can obtain whatever they show themselves fit for. Let them be educated, let their powers be cultivated to the extent for which the means are already provided, and all that is wanted, or ought to be desired, will follow of course.”

It is the creed and the experience of every successful professional woman. There is no need to appeal *ad misericordiam* for women. They can attain whatever end they set their minds on. But they often attain it best by collaboration with the other sex. Harriet Martineau proved this herself by the impetus given to her thought after she had found a kindred soul in Mr. Atkinson. She records with amusement how “one of our literary magnates” said of that collaboration that “this was the first instance in history of an able man joining a woman in authorship; and the novelty was not likely to be acquiesced in without resistance.” Perhaps so, but the resistance has clearly been overcome, for this “first instance” has been by no means the last.

At the time of the Crimean War she made a remarkable prophecy—

"I now expect, as I have anticipated for many years, a war in Europe, which may even outlast the century—with occasional lulls; and I suppose the result must be, after a dreary chaotic interval, a discarding of the existing worn-out methods of government, and probably the establishment of society under a wholly new idea. . . . The leading feature of any such radical change must be a deep modification of the institution of property—certainly in regard to land, and probably in regard to much else. Before any effectual social renovation can take place, men must efface . . . the abuse of land being held as absolute property; whereas in feudal times land was in a manner held on trust, inasmuch as every landholder was charged with the subsistence of all who lived within his bounds."

Neither the European war, nor the social revolution came quite so soon as she expected them; but we in the twentieth century have seen her prophecy fulfilled. We have seen also women achieve complete civic recognition simply by the means she advocated and foretold, by showing themselves fit for it in their work during the war.

Perhaps she had no strong sense of humour. If she had possessed one, she would scarcely have suggested such a title for a series as tales "on Sanitary subjects," to be contributed to *Household Words*. But she could see the fun of the old lady who confessed that she "did not care to know about anybody's views or reasons which will not confirm me in my own faith." She was very certain of her own superior brain development, and felt it her duty to phrenology and to posterity to leave her skull and brain to science for examination. Indeed, she had a cast taken in her lifetime,

for fear posterity should be the loser by her death at sea, or in "a railway smash." But she also was actuated by the finer motive of desiring to help the progress of aural surgery and to benefit future sufferers from the deafness, which had been to her so great a deprivation. The combination of kindness, common sense and self-appreciation, which prompted the bequest, was eminently characteristic of Harriet Martineau.

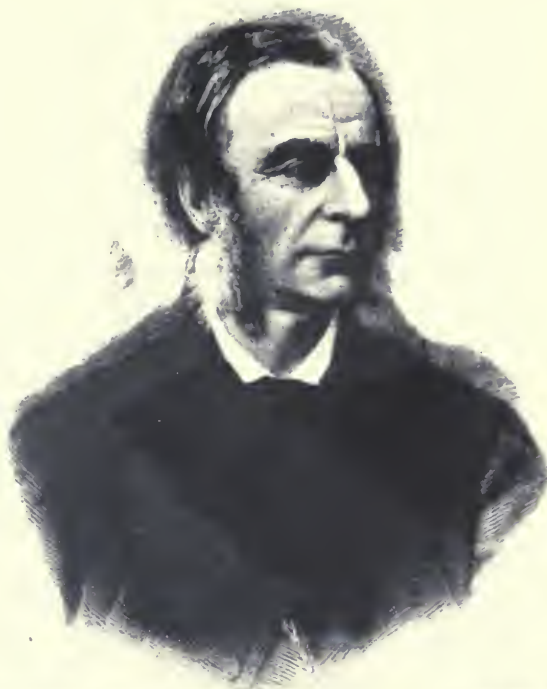
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CHARLES KINGSLEY (1819-1875)

It is a hundred years since Charles Kingsley was born; it is forty-five years since he died. His active ministry in the Church covered that great period of labour unrest which began in England with the Chartist agitation and ended with the legal recognition of the Trade Unions. Is it not, therefore, peculiarly appropriate that his name and his memory should be honoured in a day when the claim of Labour to a larger share in the wealth that it produces is being again brought home to the hearts and consciences of Englishmen?

Yet what a gulf between the two periods! In 1851, because Maurice and Kingsley taught workmen to co-operate, they were denounced for preaching—not rabid revolution, but merely Christian Socialism! Yet, so deadly was the charge in those respectable times, that Maurice ultimately paid for it by the loss of his Professorships, and Kingsley was described by the Principal of King's College as “a most reckless and dangerous writer, whose mode of using Scripture is indescribably irreverent.” What would Dr. Jelf and the *Quarterly* have said if they could have foreseen a Commission of Miners and Coal-owners, presided over by one of his Majesty's judges, declaring that



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CHARLES KINGSLEY.
(In later life.)

“ the present system of ownership and working in the coal industry stands condemned and some other system must be substituted for it, *either nationalisation* or a method of unification by national purchase, or by joint control ” ? And did Kingsley say anything worse of slum dwellings than the considered phrase of this same Report : “ There are houses in some districts which are a reproach to our civilisation. No judicial language is sufficiently strong, or sufficiently severe, to apply to their condemnation ” ?

The contrast is so great that it seems worth while to inquire what manner of man was this indescribably irreverent notoriety-hunter, to whose unhallowed preaching the working men of England owe so deep a debt of gratitude. Charles Kingsley was born at Holne Vicarage on the brow of Dartmoor, and, though he was taken at six weeks old to Burton-on-Trent and his home for the next ten years of his life was in the Fenlands, so strong an impression did he derive of his Devonshire birthplace either from his mother's talk or, as she herself thought, through prenatal influence, that he always felt himself “ a West Countryman born and bred.”

His father, another Charles, was an evangelical clergyman of the best type, a man of good family and education, a linguist, an artist and a keen sportsman. He had been brought up to the pursuits of a country gentleman, but his fortune was mismanaged during his minority, and at the age of thirty he had to face the necessity of adopting a profession. He sold his hunters, went for a

second time to the university and read for Holy Orders. Dr. Marsh, the then Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, took an interest in him and, after he had become Bishop of Peterborough, presented Kingsley to the living of Barnack, near Stamford. The church, very beautiful and very ancient, stands now in the middle of a pastoral landscape of great fertility. But in Mr. Kingsley's days it was, as it had been even in Saxon times, a landmark from the Great Fen. The Fen itself was still a wonderful wilderness of shining meres, golden reed beds and countless waterfowl, among which the rector, an excellent shot, did great execution. Little Charles, mounted in front of the keeper, often went on these fowling expeditions and learned to know the wild duck, the bittern and the bustard, and to recognise the trumpet-note of the great wild swan. The butterflies of the Fens, including the now extinct great copper, were the delight of his boyhood, and the healthy, happy life helped to combat the delicacy which at six years old threatened to get the mastery.

He was a precocious child. His mother was highly imaginative and had in her a strong strain of West Indian blood. She was a woman of character and originality, and it was to her that he owed the poetic gift, which showed itself early, and the strong religious tendency. He wrote verse before he was five years old and remarkable verse, very remarkable indeed in a child who was in other respects quite normally childlike. When he was eleven his father was given the living of Clovelly, and from that time onwards Devonshire

and its scenery and its romantic sea-going history were nearest and dearest to the boy's heart. What they meant to him he was to tell the world later in *Westward Ho!*

He went to school at Helston, in Cornwall. He was an ardent naturalist, and both there and in his Clovelly home he spent much of his time on the seashore. Botany and geology were his favourite pursuits. He was "not expert at games. He never made a score at cricket." But the schoolfellow who says this of him, adds that he had plenty of nerve and was foremost in adventure. He loved art and was always drawing. In his degree examination at Cambridge he sent up a charming and original sketch of a pump on a village green, as an answer to the question "Describe a Pump," and carefully padlocked it, surrounding it with a notice: "This pump locked during Divine Service."

He also did a good deal of out-of-the-way reading, though his zeal for school tasks was but moderate. He could, however, work up for an examination, and at Cambridge managed to do in his last six months what ought to have been spread over three years, coming out in the first class of the Classical Tripos and amongst the Senior Optimes in the Mathematical.

But by that time he had a special incentive. He fell in love, as a boy of twenty, with Miss Fanny Grenfell. She came of a well-known Oxfordshire family, who scarcely thought the position and prospects of the young Cambridge undergraduate a promising outlook for their daughter. He was

going through a mental crisis also. His father had removed from Clovelly to the rectory of St. Luke's, Chelsea. Charles felt deeply the severance from Devonshire. Much of the poverty and squalor of a London parish revolted him. He was troubled by religious doubts concerning the Trinity, the Athanasian Creed and the other stumbling-blocks common to his age and period. To the young girl, who was later to be his wife, he pours this all out, and her understanding and sympathy seem to have given him the help which he had sought in vain from older counsellors.

He had always had an intense joy in bodily exercise, but he recognised that his contempt of danger had become recklessness and his carelessness over his work a sin. He writes to her in his last year at Cambridge confessing that in his first he had been "very idle—and very sinful." But he tells her that she can hardly "understand the excitement of animal exercise, from the mere act of cutting wood or playing cricket to the manias of hunting, or shooting, or fishing. On these things more or less most young men live. Every moment which is taken from them for duty or for reading is felt to be lost." Still he forced himself to this loss in the hope that a good degree might enable him to "enter the world with a certain *prestige* which may get me a living sooner," for on the hopes of a living rested the cherished but frail expectation of winning the consent of her parents to their marriage.

He had still three years to wait. The year after leaving Cambridge he was ordained to the

curacy of Eversley, in Hampshire, where the rest of his life was to be spent ; but a curacy gave him no income to marry on, and Miss Grenfell's parents seem to have forbidden further correspondence until his prospects brightened. At times he despaired ; but the trial deepened his religious sense, and he sought distraction in parish work. There was plenty for him to do. When he first came to Eversley in 1842 not a grown-up man or woman of the labouring class could read or write. The rector had long been an absentee. The church was practically empty. The farmers' sheep grazed in the churchyard. A cracked kitchen basin inside the font served to hold the water for baptism. The altar-cloth was moth-eaten. The school, such as it was, was ten feet square and seven feet high—"I go to the school every day and teach as long as I can stand the heat and smell"—and the schoolmaster combined the duties of cobbler and parish clerk with those of instructor of youth. Two years later, when he had become rector and had got the damp and dilapidated rectory at any rate partially drained and made more or less habitable, he could start a night school there for adults, and a writing class for girls in the summer in the coach-house, with a cottage school for infants ; but it was not for years later that the parish had a proper National School.

He threw himself heart and soul into his work. He visited daily ; he went here and there in the woods and fields until there was not man, woman, or child in the parish who was not personally

known to him. For years he never dined out in the winter months and seldom in the summer. His evenings were devoted to teaching his people. Such devotion was rare in those days—how rare is proved by the genuine astonishment of men of all classes that Maurice and Kingsley should proclaim their fellowship with labour agitators.

By this time the great prize of his life was won. His position had improved. A better curacy had been offered, and he was allowed to marry Miss Grenfell early in 1844. A few months later saw his appointment as Rector of Eversley, before he had taken up the other curacy. One side of his nature was abundantly satisfied. His imaginative and poetic gift came to its full fruition. He began to write, and into his first books he poured the full fervour of his convictions upon the sanctity of the body, the beauty of wedded life, and the duty laid upon all to work for the health and happiness of their fellows.

The Saint's Tragedy appeared in 1848, *Alton Locke* in 1849 and *Yeast* in 1851. Kingsley was to write better romances, to grow in scholarship, to picture the schools of Alexandria, the preaching of St. Augustine, the lives of the great Christian Hermits; but he put more of his soul into this young study of St. Elizabeth of Hungary than into any later work.

It was begun as a labour of love, soon after he left Cambridge, to be offered as a gift to his wife on her marriage day, if ever that day should come. Before it was completed he had learned, as he himself says, in the school of marriage those

lessons "which the hearth and home alone can teach." Wedlock to him was "a state so spiritual, so paradisaic, that, like the kingdom of heaven, it is only through much tribulation that men can be fitted to enter into it." No wonder, then, that he looked with horror upon the monkish view of life, and that he expressed himself in the preface to the drama with more vigour than judgment, or charity.

Elizabeth had become to him "a type of two great mental struggles of the Middle Age; first of that between scriptural, or unconscious, and Popish, or conscious, purity: in a word, between innocence and prudery; next of the struggle between healthy human affection and the Manichean contempt with which a celibate clergy would have all men regard the names of husband, wife, or parent. . . . If this book shall cause one Englishman honestly to ask himself, 'Have I, as a Protestant, been accustomed to assert the purity and dignity of those offices? Do I believe them to be as callings from God, spiritual, sacramental, divine, eternal? Or am I at heart regarding them like the Papist, merely as heaven's indulgences to the infirmities of fallen man?'—then will my book have done its work. . . . If, again, it shall deter one young man from the example of those miserable *dilettanti*, who in books and sermons are whimpering meagre secondhand praises of celibacy—depreciating as carnal and degrading those family ties to which they owe their own existence and in the enjoyment of which they themselves all the while unblushingly indulge—insulting thus

their own wives and mothers—nibbling ignorantly at the very root of that household purity which constitutes the distinctive superiority of Protestant over Popish nations—again my book will have done its work.”

Not very pretty, perhaps, but when Kingsley got excited he did not mince matters. He was always very excitable. “Constant movement was a necessity to him. It was an effort to him to sit still through a meal.” His chief solace was a long clay pipe, and he believed neither in tectotalism, nor in abstinence from tobacco. Again and again his vehemence got him into trouble, not only as Parson Lot, whose placards so upset the Principal of King’s College, but with far greater antagonists. It is not the smallest of Kingsley’s titles to remembrance that his intemperate attack upon Newman—in a study of another Elizabeth—drew forth the great *Apologia pro Vita Sua*.

Kingsley had always been roused to anger by the Tractarians, “their tracts and their poetry and *nouvellettes*, which give glimpses into the ascetic tone of their writers’ minds and serve as keys to the peculiar form of principles which they have adopted and which is all wrong, I believe, before God” (letter to Miss Grenfell, 1842). And as a historian he was as much at home amongst the writings of the early Fathers of the Church as Newman was, and failed to find in them what Newman found. But it was going far beyond mere difference of opinion to say, as he said in 1864, that “truth, for its own sake, had never been a virtue with the Roman clergy. . . . Father

Newman informs us that it need not, and on the whole ought not, to be ; that cunning is the weapon which heaven has given to the Saints wherewith to withstand the brute male force of the wicked world which marries and is given in marriage." Newman might well challenge him to produce chapter and verse. All he could do was to reply that Newman saved his honesty at the expense of his logic, for "though no doubt he had once had a human reason, he had gambled it away" and seemed to prefer "the charge of insipience to that of insincerity." The laurels of this famous controversy certainly did not rest with Kingsley.

But to return to his dramatic poem, it secured the honour of a preface by Frederick Maurice, was eagerly read at Oxford and fiercely attacked by the High Church party. Bunsen thought highly both of it and of *Hypatia* : "I do not hesitate to call these two works by far the most important and perfect of this genial writer. . . . The tragedy of 'St. Elizabeth' shows that Kingsley can grapple not only with the novel, but with the more severe rules of dramatic art." Perhaps it is more dramatic than poetic. The songs and some of the lyrical passages have Kingsley's charm—"Oh ! that we two were maying" is one of them—the same charm with which later he was to endow *The Water Babies* and *Madam How and Lady Why* and *Prose Idylls*. But the blank verse is not more than respectable, and there are astoundingly bad lines.

"The words are horror—yet they are orthodox!"
could hardly have been written by any poet

except one who had let his didactic intention get altogether the better of his poetic instinct. Indeed, the whole drama is too didactic. It is a sermon against monkishness and in praise of wedded love; more interesting to read, no doubt, than Kingsley's sermons strictly so-called, but it does not differ from them essentially.

As a ballad writer and a lyrist, however, Kingsley will always have a strong claim to be remembered. That "The Sands of Dee" has been done to death by drawing-room reciters detracts in no way from its haunting melody. The "Ode to the North-east Wind" is perhaps chiefly remarkable for its subject; but the songs—"The Three Fishers," "I once had a sweet little doll, dears," "Clear and cool," "When all the world is young, lad"—sing themselves, as good songs should. "The Bad Squire," though overweighted with purpose, has the true ballad touch and is instinct with real power and passion. And there is a fine swing about the very last ballad he ever wrote, away in the Rocky Mountains only a year before his death, "Are you ready for your steeplechase, Lorraine, Lorraine, Lorrèc?"

The prose works fall into three groups; the historical romances, the modern novels—novels very much with a purpose, and the historical works. There were, besides, many pamphlets, sermons, and fugitive pieces; but they were by the way. *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*, the tract which launched the London tailors on their co-operative crusade, was the most vigorous and the most famous. Of the historical romances *Hyppatia* is the finest,

Westward Ho! the most generally readable, *Hereward the Wake* the most reminiscent of Sir Walter Scott. But all alike are fine, full-blooded tales, true romantic history, and though not without their didactic passages—Kingsley must always be exulting in bodily strength and prowess, or running a tilt at asceticism and Popishness, or hymning wedded love—yet in none of these does the didacticism get in the way of the story. They are still devoured by young readers, not only of the bookish sort. The present writer confesses that she read *Westward Ho!* in her teens more times than she can count, and can still thrill to the tragedy of the martyrdom of the beautiful Hypatia. And the beauty of the setting of the Saxon story in the fenland of Kingsley's boyhood is only equalled by the salt savour of the Devonshire air and the glamour of the tropical seascapes in *Westward Ho!*

But it is different with the modern novels. *Two Years Ago* is at least twice twenty years ago in old-fashionedness, judged by modern standards of fiction. And if we can bear with Kingsley's muscular Christian heroes, it is difficult to be patient with his heroines. They are altogether too conventional, too much cut on the "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever" model. Argemone in *Yeast*, Valencia in *Two Years Ago*, Lillian and Eleanor in *Alton Locke*, there is a sort of Tennysonian unreality about them all, and we decline to be interested in them. Kingsley did better with his romantic women, his Hypatia and Pelagia, his beautiful Indian maiden, Ayacanora, who becomes the bride of Amyas Leigh; or with

his women in humble life. Crossthwaite's Katie in *Alton Locke*. Grace Harvey in *Two Years Ago*, though even she is a little "too good for human nature's daily food."

What life there is in these books is derived from his message, not from his gifts as a novelist. How little he can now interest the novel reader was proved when his daughter published his posthumous novel, *The Tutor's Story*. But *Alton Locke* brought home to many the curse of mid-Victorian industrialism, and *Yeast* exposed the evil of the Game Laws and the sins of landlords as vigorously as Mr. Galsworthy. Both books will always be read by the student of social questions; and the cholera scenes of *Two Years Ago* have the vividness of a real experience, the experience Kingsley himself went through with fever and diphtheria epidemics in his own parish and in London in the cholera year of 1849.

Far greater perennial charm attaches to the stories he wrote for his children, in which he could give full play to his poetical feeling for nature and the close observation of bird, beast, flower, sea-shore and pond life, which was an intimate joy of his every day. "By day and by night, in fair weather and in storm, grateful for heat and cold, rain and sunshine, light and soothing darkness, he drank in nature. It seemed as if no bird, or beast, or insect, scarcely a drifting cloud in the sky, passed him unnoticed, unwelcomed." So writes a friend and frequent companion of his country walks. And all this knowledge and delight in natural objects he puts into *The Water Babies*,

into *Glaucus, or the Wonders of the Sea Shore*, and into *Madam How and Lady Why*. He put in other things, too, the sermons in stones which so sensitive and strenuous a thinker could not fail to draw; but in these books and in *The Heroes*, where his love and understanding of children inspired him, the lessons do not spoil the story.

He wrote them with consummate ease. The story of little Tom was written off in half an hour and sent to *Macmillan's Magazine* with scarcely a correction. And he so enjoyed writing them that he seems almost to have felt they needed an excuse and tells F. D. Maurice that he has "not been idling his time away," but has been trying "in all sorts of queer ways to make children and grown folks understand that there is a quite miraculous and divine element underlying all physical nature," though he has "wrapped up the parable in seeming tomfooleries" so as to get it "swallowed by a generation who are not believing with anything like their whole heart in the Living God."

Of his serious historical work, undertaken mainly as lectures after his appointment as Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1860, there is little need here to speak. His personal influence amongst his undergraduate hearers was considerable. He was singled out by the Prince Consort to give special instruction to the Prince of Wales. And he was able to pursue the researches into the history of Alexandrian philosophy which had always been an interest to him. But his chief value as a teacher lay in his personality, in the vivid, vehement, crusading impulsiveness,

which inspired all his intercourse with others. It was this which drew crowds to Eversley to hear him preach, crowds which fatigued and almost annoyed him, so anxious was he to be just the pastor amongst his people and in no sense the fashionable preacher. "I cannot bear having my place turned into a fair on Sundays, and all this talking after church." He sympathised with his old sexton, who couldn't think why there was "such flitting to and fro to our church on Sundays." But the fashionable world would not be denied, and besides the merely curious there were many souls in genuine trouble who sought his counsel by letter and interview. These he never turned away without striving his hardest to help them.

His home life was of the happiest. His ramshackle, untidy house was always full of guests, many of whom have left descriptions of what Eversley Rectory meant to them. He and his wife had planned out their life together before marriage. No talk of household matters except between nine and ten in the morning ; no parish business in the evening, were two of their excellent rules. And the relationship of master and servant was to have no taint of commercial barter about it. How this was carried out can be guessed from the fact that when he died no servant in his house had been there less than seventeen years. He had intensely the *joie de vivre*, and joyousness was the atmosphere he created for his children. "I wonder if there is so much laughing in any other home in England as in ours ?" he often said. And, next to children, he loved animals, dogs and

horses and cats, and he would not have it that for them there was no future state.

No wonder that from such a home radiated love for the brethren, and that Charles Kingsley was in the forefront wherever oppression and tyranny were grinding the faces of the poor. The story of the Chartist riots and *Politics for the People*, and the birth of the Christian Socialist movement has been told in the chapter on Maurice and need not be repeated here ; but if Maurice was the main source of inspiration, Kingsley was the dynamic force. He was no original thinker. He found his inspiration in Maurice, in Carlyle, and where he might ; but the conversion of a large section of society to see the world from the standpoint of the workers was due largely to this man, by birth and by instincts an aristocrat, but by sympathy a Christian democrat.

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